

AN HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE GRAND PORTAGE  
GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT, MINNESOTA

by

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VOYAGEURS PORTAGING. From The Winnipeg Country by Samuel Hubbard Scudder, 1886, p. 70.

DEDICATION

To Dr. Solon J. Buck, Superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, who perceived the significance of the Great Carrying Place or Grand Portage to North American History and who initiated a program to preserve it.

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### Preface and Acknowledgements

The major objective of this report is to "Conduct Research to Describe the Historical Character and Uses of the Grand Portage." This information will become a portion of a comprehensive holistic Trail Management Plan for the Grand Portage. The Scope of Work for this project lists and discusses a series of ten areas of research that relate directly to the history and uses of the portage over a time period of about two centuries from late prehistoric times to the early 19th century (c. 1600-1825).

Grand Portage National Monument is located on the north shore of Lake Superior in extreme northeastern Minnesota. It is composed of an historic late 18th century fur trade depot, the unique Grand Portage, and Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River. The "Great Carrying Place" originated in prehistoric times as a route around a series of chasms and rapids in the lower Pigeon River. It led from a quiet bay on Lake Superior for more than eight miles to the Pigeon River. This waterway was the entrepot to the fur rich northwest region around Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, the Red River of the North, and the Athabasca Country. French trader-explorers entered the region c. 1660 and controlled it for a century. British and Scots traders then expanded their fur trade empire to the Pacific Ocean. Most of the historical data in this report relates to the North West Company c. 1784-1802. The youthful United States gained this site in the early 19th century by diplomacy.

My sincere thanks are made to Jean A. Brookins and Debbie Miller of the Publications & Research Division, Minnesota Historical Society, for their support during this undertaking. Don Haider and Steve Bell of the Society's Research Center were continually helpful. Dr. Bruce M. White patiently corrected my errors and omissions in this report at least three times and then printed it. Dr. Guy E. Gibbon, Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota, cheerfully provided reports on his pioneering work on the Savanna Portage in Aitkin County, Minnesota. Thomas D. Thiessen, Archeologist, Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska, provided several drafts of his meticulous notes on the invaluable David Thompson descriptions and measurements of the portage. John H. Sowl, Project Manager, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska, gave understanding and humor to the contract procedures. Leon S. Warmiski and Bennett McCardle, Ontario Public Archives, Toronto, Ontario, speeded shipment of the David Thompson microfilms. Curtis L. Roy, President of the Friends of Grand Portage, read several drafts of this report, wrote notes on errors and suggested improvements. He also gave continued support and encouragement towards its completion. Dean Einwalter, Superintendent, Grand Portage National Monument, supported the project and made many suggestions for improving this report. Frank E. Vyzralek, Bismarck, ND, gave three days of his time to keyboard data into the report. Dr. Vergil E. Noble, Supervisory Archeologist, Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, Omaha, Nebraska, made valuable suggestions to improve the report. My warm thanks are due to all of these friends for their invaluable aid in completing this undertaking.

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**Executive Summary**

Grand Portage National Monument lies on the rugged north shore of Lake Superior in northeastern Minnesota. It has a partially reconstructed late 18th century fur trade depot; an 8 1/4 mile long portage; and Fort Charlotte, an advanced depot on the Pigeon River. The monument preserves unique historical values of the fur trade era, the exploration of northwestern North America, and the American Indian.

The Grand Portage Trail is the major historic feature of the monument. Originating in prehistoric times, it became the gateway to the northwest for the French and British fur trade of the 17th and 18th centuries. Voyageurs carried packs of trade goods up the long portage to the Pigeon River and returned with bales of furs.

This report focuses on the physical and ecological aspects of the portage; its history and uses in the late 18th century and makes recommendations for archeological studies of some of its poses or resting places. This information provides the basic facts for the preparation of a Trail Management Plan.

Selected poses can serve as on site interpretation points to tell the story of the portage and the men who used it. Future research is needed to guide archeological investigations, historic preservation, and interpretation of this centuries old portage.

## Introduction

### Some Aspects of Portages

The development of a network of waterways and connecting portages was contingent upon an even earlier Indian achievement. This was the creation of the graceful birch bark canoe. The pioneering study of Indian watercraft by Edwin T. Adney and Howard I. Chapelle, (The Bark and Skin Boats of North America, 1964:3) notes that the bark canoes of North American Indians, particularly those of birch bark, were among the most highly developed manually propelled primitive watercraft. They state: "The great skill exhibited in their design and construction shows that a long period of development must have taken place before they became known to the white man." A few pages later they develop this thesis more fully:

Records of bark canoes, contained in the reports of the early white explorers of North America, are woefully lacking in detail, but they at least give grounds for believing that the bark canoes even then were highly developed, and were the product of a very long period of existence and improvement prior to the first appearance of Europeans (Ibid. p. 7).

Going further, their comments lead into our subject matter:

The Indian bark canoes were most efficient watercraft for use in forest travel; . . . The canoes, being light, could be carried overland for long distances, even where trails were rough or nonexistent, (Ibid. p. 3).

Obviously, generations of thought and experiment preceeded this canoe development. After the first few prototype canoes were made and gradually improved, transportation became far more rapid and practical. It is tempting to speculate that these early watercraft were used mostly in the food quest--for hunting, fishing, and gathering of wild plant foods. We must not forget either that a long slow process of technological development lay behind the making of maple sugar and the gathering and preservation of wild rice. And these aspects of American Indian life were integrated thoroughly into the development of portages.

The materials now quoted at length are highly relevant to portages. They have been abstracted from an unpublished manuscript report, Historic Portages in Minnesota: An Archeological and Landscape History Approach, 1991 by Robert C. Vogel and David G. Stanley. This document was prepared for the Minnesota Historical Society State Historic Preservation Office; copies of the report are filed there.

In the context of the fur trade, a portage was literally a carrying place between water routes, distinguishable from a road by its relatively short distance and by the portager's need to carry their vessels with them from one waterway to another (Ibid., p. 2).

In general, the literature of the history of the European fur trade and exploration of Minnesota does not accurately reflect

the importance of portage routes in the development of regional transportation systems. However, many scholars believe that portages are at least as important as relict government roads, oxcart trails, stage routes, and other resources associated with the theme of transportation. Historians generally believe that portages are significant as locations of important events and because of their association with regional historical themes, (e.g., the fur trade), the study of which can yield important information about the state's history. Those archaeologists lucky enough to have located a portage containing intact cultural deposits or diagnostic artifacts have been wont to consider portages as potential archaeological sites, the excavation of which might provide the answers to specific research questions (Ibid., p. 8).

Portage trails physically comprise a specific type of vernacular or cultural landscape. Borrowing a concept familiar to historical geographers, the authors of this report are inclined to regard portages as cultural landforms that have been shaped by historical and natural processes. In addition to buried artifacts and features, portage trails often retain visual landscape characteristics indicative of their historic function. The findings of archival research and field survey suggest that spatial relationships between individual portage trails, their component features and associated water routes is critical to evaluating their significance as historic landscapes (Ibid. p.8). Each of the major phases of Minnesota history had its characteristic route geography, developed to serve the needs of particular groups of people at particular times; and each successive phase inherited parts of the earlier route geography, to which it added its own modes of transportation. Portage trails, an important link in waterborne transportation systems which existed up until the late 19th century (some are still in recreational use), were marked out by Native American Indians and were an indelible feature of the historical geography of the fur trade (Ibid., p. 11).

What exactly do we mean by portage trail? Portage entered American English in the 17th century and has remained in common usage ever since, especially in northern Minnesota in the context of the historic fur trade and modern recreational canoeing. Etymologically, it is an Old French word borrowed from the Latin portare, "to carry." Used as a noun, it describes a "carrying place," i.e., a trail or pathway between two water bodies. As a verb it signifies the act of carrying boats and their cargoes overland. As a descriptive term, it is an important place-name that has been applied to many natural and cultural features throughout the northern United States and Canada (Ibid., pp. 11-12).

In National Register parlance, portage trails fall within the generic classification of sites, which includes archeological deposits as well as the locations of important events. This distinction between archeological sites and historic sites is important with regard to portage trails because while most portages probably possess

some archeological research potential, the overall cultural resource value of portage trails is most often the product of their historical and physical association with other aspects of cultural history, particularly waterborne transportation and the fur trade of the 17th through 19th centuries (Ibid., p. 12).

Portage trails are of interest as historic landscapes because they document the ages-old relationship between human beings and their environment. In the sense here used, landscape is not simply an actual scene viewed by an observer, but an area comprising a distinctive association of physical and cultural characteristics; literally, a "land shape." Landscapes are commonly distinguished as designed or vernacular. As defined by the National Park Service, a designed landscape is a historic landscape that has been consciously designed as a work of art (i.e., landscape architecture). Portage trails, which developed without benefit of schooled engineers and which are significant primarily because of their association with land use, are therefore vernacular landscapes; more importantly, they are cultural landforms, i.e., historic sites shaped by historical processes that create a specific microenvironment based on recognizable forms such as topography, vegetation, place names, structures and buried cultural deposits. Because of their association with transportation lines, individual portage trails may also be significant as component elements of routes. Finally, portage trail landscapes represent the physical geography behind history. Minnesota geography is dominated by three major drainage systems or watersheds which carry off the surface waters of the state north to Hudson Bay, east to the Great Lakes and south into the Mississippi River. The rivers, creeks and associated lakes within these drainage basins essentially describe the route geography of the thoroughfares used by American Indians, European explorers and fur traders. But water travel was subject to interruption caused by rapids, falls or shallows, and not all of the major lakes and rivers were interconnected. Moreover, most of the strategic water routes were separated by relatively short distances over land (Ibid., p. 12).

Portaging relied upon two critical technological innovations, both apparently of American Indian origin. The foremost of these was the birchbark canoe, which made portaging feasible over long distances. Like the toboggan and the snowshoe, the birchbark canoe was used by all of the Algonquin tribes of the St. Lawrence-Great Lakes basin and was readily adopted by the French and British. The unique marine architecture and adaptability of the birchbark canoe fascinated European observers. Rene de Brehant de Galinee, a French missionary brother who conducted a reconnaissance of the eastern Great lakes in 1669, declared: "The convenience of these canoes is great in these waters, full of cataracts or waterfalls, and rapids through which it is impossible to take any boat. When you reach them you load canoe and baggage upon your shoulders and go overland until the navigation is good; and then you put your canoe back into the water, and embark again... I see no handiwork of the Indians that appears to me to merit

the attention of Europeans, except their canoes and their rackets for walking on snow [i.e., snowshoes] (Louise Phelps Kellogg, Early Narratives of the Northwest, 1634-1699, 1917, pp. 171-173). Wrote George Catlin: "The bark canoe of the Chippeways is, perhaps, the most beautiful and light model of all the water crafts that ever were invented" (Kellogg, 1917, pp. 172-173 & George Catlin, North American Indians, vol.2, 1965, p. 138).

Of only slightly less importance than the canoe itself was the portage collar, essentially a broad leather strap employed to pack baggage over the portage trail. Unlike the now familiar backpack or rucksack, the portage collar secured the load to a band worn around the portager's forehead. During the fur trade era, the standard load for a voyageur was two pieces or packs: the typical two-piece load weighed 160 to 200 pounds. Securing the two ends of the portage collar to one of the pieces, the voyageur placed the band around his forehead and, assuming the portaging position (stooping, knees bent), let the load rest on the small of his back. His hands being free, he then hoisted the second piece up over his head and left it perched atop the first pack. This mode of carrying had the advantage of distributing the weight more or less evenly over the upper and lower torso. Customarily, two pieces are carried with more ease than one, on account of the direction of the body, but occasionally a voyageur volunteered to hoist up and carry a third piece. "The experience of traders, and observation of the manner of the Indians, have proved this to be the most convenient way of carrying, in this country," noted Lieutenant Allen. "It is accordingly practiced by all; and every thing to be transported over portages, is put up with a view of this method of the portage collar. All the portage roads, too, are selected with the same view" (Journal of Lieutenant James Allen, in Phillip P. Mason ed., Schoolcraft's Expedition to Lake Itasca, 1958, p. 192).

At the dawn of the Contact Period, canoeists desiring to transit from one waterway to another had to rely on poorly marked native portage paths. With the acceleration of the trade, there was a pressing demand for locating and improving critical portage routes. While most portages were little more than trackways, a few key routes eventually developed into roads, with designated landings, campsites and poses (rest stops) along the portage trail. Some, like the Rat Portage from Lake of the Woods to the Winnipeg River, even had hewn log causeways over boggy areas. It wasn't long before the most strategically important portages found their way onto contemporary maps (Vogel & Stanley, 1991, p. 14).

Defining a portage as "the longest distance between two points," the historical geographer Ralph H. Brown went on to note that "the portage paths around falls or between rivers were likely to become gutters of mud in rainy weather..." Indeed, the major impediments to portaging were trail obstructions and high water. Depending on climatic variables, some portage paths were impassable because of standing water. Fallen trees and boulders abounded but swamps were the most

natural obstruction: being often located in low, swampy areas, portage paths tended to become more difficult and dangerous to traverse over time. Trails which were passable one year were sometimes closed the next. Most were little more than narrow trackways and tended to shift their positions over time. In winter, some portages remained open for use by sledging parties, but most were impassable (Ralph H. Brown, Historical Geography of the United States, New York, 1948, p. 176). The literature of exploration and the fur trade is filled with random observations on the vicissitudes of portaging, of "saunting" rapids and traversing hills and swamps, "dirty little portages" filled with fallen logs and boulders, mud, black flies and mosquitoes. "The transportation of the goods at this grand portage, or great carrying-place, was a work of seven days of severe and dangerous exertion," wrote the elder Alexander Henry of his experiences on the Grand Portage of the Pigeon River in 1775 (Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures, 1901, p. 24). Half a century later, Major Joseph Delafield, surveying the United States-Canada boundary waters, noted that where the old track of the Grand Portage of the Pigeon River was not mud it was rock, "and the old road is so closed with a young growth of trees and bushes, that it is difficult to carry anything the size of a canoe piece without injury, if there has been a dew or rain, and to carry the canoe is still more difficult" (Robert McElroy and Thomas Riggs, editors. The Unfortified Boundary, 1943, pp. 404-405).

Portage trails survive in the modern landscape as cultural relicts, i.e., formerly dominant but now obsolete forms. Not surprisingly, the greatest number of portage trails in the state are found in the Central Lakes and Border Lakes regions, where the greatest concentration of lakes is found. Interconnected to form hundreds of miles of canoe routes, they were the highways of the fur trade. Apart from the still active portage pathways in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and Voyageurs National Park, unnumbered abandoned portage trails in Minnesota remain conspicuous cultural landforms, despite lumbering, agriculture, road building and other forms of development (Vogel & Stanley, 1991, p. 14).

It should be noted that portage trails were an important aspect of the pre-European cultural landscape, although the route geography of ancient North America as well as the relative importance of long distance waterborne versus overland trade among various prehistoric peoples have been subjects of some controversy. Traditionally, historians and antiquarians have argued that more or less well established trails made by animals existed long before the appearance of human beings, that ancient Native American Indians followed these trails which evolved into media of communication through their use by prehistoric peoples. This theory is difficult to dismiss, if for no better reason than because it is common knowledge that many species of wild animals of sufficient size to create a visible trail across the land are also capable swimmers (Ibid, p. 17).

While it has been asserted by some writers that these native portage trails were used exclusively for birchbark canoes, this is not at all

certain. It is not known when the birch-bark canoe was first developed, but it is fairly certain that it was an Algonquin invention and that it was used by American Indians long before European contact. Because the biological range of the paper birch generally delimits the range of the birchbark canoe, it was also adopted by various Siouan-speaking groups, including the Eastern Dakota. Father Hennepin noted that the Dakota enjoyed an important military advantage over their southern enemies because their bark canoes enabled them "to go from lake to lake and follow any river to attack their enemies," whose dugout log pirogues could not be paddled as fast or portaged as easily (Marion E. Cross, Father Louis Hennepin's Description of Louisiana, 1938, p. 99). Portages can be most readily classified as low or high trails on the basis of topographical characteristics. Low portage trails tended to be the shortest and most direct routes between two water bodies and were characteristically narrow, undulating pathways across low lying, marshy or boggy ground. The length of the low portage trail varied inversely with the elevation of the water table: a mile-long portage passed during high water could be three-five or even ten miles long in a dry season. In midwinter, low portages sometimes became routes for travelers using sledges or snowshoes. Under certain conditions, some of the smaller low portages could be bypassed altogether by having the occupants of the canoe wade alongside their craft and literally drag it over the obstruction, a process known as saulting. As described in the Jesuit Relations: "In ascending these rapids it is often necessary to alight from the canoe and walk in the river... The canoe is grasped by the hand and dragged behind, two men usually sufficing for this." In navigating small streams, voyageurs sometimes dragged their canoes over beaver dams from one pond to the next (Jesuit Relations, vol. 49, pp. 261-263).

There is very little information with regard to the archeological characteristics of portages in general, and of low portages in particular: only the Savanna Portage has been studied in any detail. (In Aitkin County, Minn. between Big Sandy Lake and the St. Louis River). Some low portage routes may have been artificially enlarged or improved to facilitate portaging: fur traders actually excavated a "canal" for dragging canoes along one segment of the Savanna Portage (Guy E. Gibbon & Scott Jacobson, "The Old Savanna Portage," unpublished manuscript, n.d.) Fur trade accounts also commonly distinguish between regular portages, where canoes were unloaded and carried overland, and decharges (discharges) or "half-portages," where the canoe was lightened and then paddled through the rapids and shallows while the cargo was packed over a portage trail. The term demi-charge was customarily used to describe the packs taken out of the canoe and portaged (Vogel & Stanley, 1991, p.25).

High portage trails were the overland routes over which both water craft and their cargoes were transported. High portage trails provided detours around navigation obstructions, linked rivers and lakes, and often spanned watershed divides connecting the heads of streams

flowing in opposite directions. Perhaps the most common form was the riverside trail used to detour around rapids or falls. Most portage trails were little more than uncut pathways through the woods, rough, narrow and crooked. Over time, the most heavily traveled portage trails became permanent trackways, rutted and sunken. Some appear to have been marked: Hennepin describes the Fox-Wisconsin portage as marked by American Indians and notes that his party "passed the night there in order to leave marks and crosses on the trunks of trees" (Cross, 1938, p. 126). The Savanna Portage trail appears to have been marked by blazes on trees, some of which were still visible in the 1920s. References to the mai (maypole) or "lob tree," made by cutting the topmost branches of a tall tree, crop up occasionally in the literature of the fur trade as a portage landmark similar in purpose to trail blazing. Some of the more heavily traveled portages developed into roads, sometimes with log causeways where they crossed streams or swampy areas, and stone steps where the grade was particularly steep (Ibid., 1991, p. 26).

Portage terminals or canoe landings represent the sites where portage trails begin and end. An important consideration in locating portage landings was the necessity of unloading the canoes while they were still afloat, the bark underside of the Canot du Nord being extremely fragile and therefore never allowed to rest on the bottom. The physical characteristics of these sites vary considerably. Some appear to have been highly developed rest and refitting stations where travelers would have prepared for the next stage in their journey; others were hardly more than tracks over bogs or sheer rock faces (Ibid.). Pose (derived from the French word poser ("to deposit"), sometimes rendered in English as "pause" or "post," refers to canoe or pack rests established along portage trail routes. The term was also the historic unit of measure for all portages: early travelers reckoned the standard distances between poses to be between one-third and one-half mile, but noted that when the country was rough and the portage grade considerable, the poses were located closer together, while on short, level portage trails the interval sometimes exceeded a mile (Ibid., p. 27).

Portage trails physically comprise a specific type of vernacular or cultural landscape. Borrowing a concept familiar to historical geographers, the authors are inclined to regard portages as cultural landforms that have been shaped by historical and natural processes. In addition to buried artifacts and features, portage trails often retain visual landscape characteristics indicative of their historic function. The findings of the archival research and field survey suggest that that spatial relationships between individual portage trails, their component features and associated water routes is often critical to evaluating their significance as historic landscapes (Ibid., p. 29).

The archeological record of Minnesota's portage sites has not been adequately assessed, but the present writers are inclined to believe



that many portage sites are relatively undisturbed, although their potential for containing buried deposits is extremely difficult to determine. cursory site inspections have revealed traces of portage trails, but very little systematic survey or testing has been done, except at a handful of sites. Likewise, known locations of other historic portage trails have not been systematically surveyed. Because there are relatively few extant historic sites which date from the fur trade and exploration era, portage sites from that period take on added importance (Ibid, p. 30).

Dr. Guy E. Gibbon investigated the western end of the Savanna Portage a short distance northeast of Big Sandy Lake, Aitkin County, Minnesota. In 1982-83, a student used a metal detector to locate and flag locations near the site of a "trader's cabin." This was an aid in locating the approximate end of the portage. Other investigations located a fur trade era "canal" where canoes had been dragged along through mud and shallow water. In more recent years, four poses on this portage have been located largely through the use of metal detectors. Small caches of trade goods have also been found along the portage (Guy E. Gibbon and Eugene Willms, "The Savanna Portage: An Archaeological Study," an unpublished manuscript, 1985; "The Old Savanna Portage." n.d., unpublished manuscript [by Guy E. Gibbon and Scott Jacobson]. "Portage Survey and Excavation: An Example from Minnesota," 1991, an unpublished manuscript.

#### Comments on Poses or Pauses

Please note that this information is an amplification of the section on the same subject in the paper on portages by Robert C. Vogel and David G. Stanley, 1991.

Most medium portages had camps or habitation sites at either end. All difficult or long portages had camps at their beginnings and ends. Frequently, they would have camps at mid points or at locations where there were creeks, permanent springs or grassy areas.

Every long or difficult portage had "poses" or resting places which were from 600 to 800 yards apart, depending upon portage conditions. Poses were often located immediately after a portage had passed over a steep hill or through a difficult wet place. The pose, however, was more than a resting place for weary voyageurs. It also served as a temporary collection point for the pieces being portaged. All packs of goods, provisions, or other items were brought together at a pose before being carried on to the next pose farther along the portage. This procedure appears to have been initially designed as security from Indian raids and as a safeguard to hinder pillaging by employees. With the same poses being used by all who passed across a portage, it was logical to measure the length or difficulty of a portage by the number of its poses (Gates, 1965, p. 16).

At poses, voyageurs rested, smoked their clay pipes, no doubt gossiped. Few if any poses have been located and excavated. Thus, they are largely an

unknown quantity. Some poses, especially those near water sources such as streams or springs, were used for camps. Difficult terrain, poor weather conditions, unseasoned voyageurs, and other factors such as illness made camping mandatory. These locations theoretically should have scattered artifacts and evidences of camping, campfires for cooking, etc. Presumably, there should be fragments of clay pipes, pipe stems, and stray personal objects such as knives, fire steels, buttons, beads, flints, and similar materials.

## Chapter 1

### Chapter 1: A Brief History of the Grand Portage

#### Natural History of the Grand Portage Locality Geology of the Grand Portage Area

A series of five interconnected great lakes lie along the southern rim of the ancient worn rock of the Precambrian Shield and drain into the Atlantic Ocean through the St. Lawrence River. The 1,200 mile east-west water route of the Great Lakes lured European traders and explorers into the interior of the continent at an early date. Their attention soon focused on the north shore of Lake Superior and the rivers flowing into it which led to the unexplored northwest. One promising route lay in Thunder Bay, a deep natural harbor and up the Kaministiquia River. Of lesser significance at the time was the Pigeon River about forty miles to the southwest along the lake shore. It was a shorter and better route to the northwest once a way had been found around the falls and rapids upstream from the mouth of the Pigeon River. The key to it was a long, rough portage connecting a large sheltered bay on Lake Superior with the westward flowing Pigeon River. This of course was the legendary Grand Portage (Eric Morse, Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then And Now, pp. 27-29, 1968 & Alan R. Woolworth, "The Great Carrying Place," in Where Two Worlds Meet by Carolyn Gilman, pp. 110-115).

The Grand Portage was surpassed only by Hudson Bay as a natural route into the heart of northern North America during nearly two centuries of the fur trade. It was strategically situated between Lake Superior and a chain of connected waterways leading to the northern Great Plains, the Rocky Mountains, and the fur-rich Athabasca country. These geographical advantages led to the development of a great inland fur trade depot at the head of Grand Portage Bay. It became the headquarters of the British North West Company and its fur trade empire which spanned the continent by the late 1790's. Today, Grand Portage National Monument includes the partially reconstructed North West Company depot, the eight and one-half mile portage that bypasses obstructions in the lower Pigeon River, and the site of Fort Charlotte at the portage's western end (Ibid., p. 110).

Three key geographical features of the Grand Portage locality made it the best water route between the upper Great Lakes and the north and west. These were (1) a sheltered bay on the north shore of Lake Superior with level land for trading facilities; (2) a relatively easy portage around the impassable lower Pigeon River; and (3) the river itself, which was an excellent natural waterway leading to the Northwest. (Ibid.).

A range of jagged hills behind Grand Portage Bay resemble small mountains. They are the most prominent local topographic feature aside from the massive presence of Lake Superior. These hills are formed from great uplifts of a volcanic stone called diabase. The valleys between them are

formed from an older, softer stone called Rove slate. The Rove slate was broken by volcanic activity and molten lava flows that formed dikes. Thus, the hills are usually diabase and the valleys are underlain by slate. A "Topographic & Geologic Map of the Grand Portage Trail," (Map 16) depicts the intimate relationship of topography and geology to the Grand Portage ("The Topography and Geology of the Grand Portage," by George M. Schwartz, Minnesota History, Vol. 9, 1928, pp. 26-30).

It is also significant that the portage rises almost 700 feet during its eight and one-half mile course from Lake Superior to the Pigeon River. Lake Superior is approximately 600 feet above sea level, the Pigeon River at the upper or western end of the trail is slightly less than 1300 feet above sea level (The Grand Portage and Cascades Quadrangles, 7.5 Minute Series, U.S. Geological Survey, 1959 & 1960.)

#### Regional Ecology and Natural Resources

The natural setting of the Grand Portage region is discussed to provide a background for a better understanding of the available natural resources and the marked limitations of the area in terms of food production. The upper Great Lakes area of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron form the Canadian Biotic Province. Climatic conditions, soils, water, and vegetation all played important roles in the subsistence activities at this location.

Alexander Mackenzie, the noted trader and explorer of northern North America in the late 18th century viewed the relatively poor food resources along the north shore of Lake Superior and estimated that only 150 families of Indians inhabited the region. In his opinion, there were large supplies of fish in the great lake which supplied the most reliable food resources (W. Kaye Lamb, ed., The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, 1970, pp. 95-96.)

The Grand Portage lies well within the Canadian biotic province with the uneven topography of a heavily glaciated country of gravel hills and ridges, swamps and rock outcrops. The climate is cool with an average mean temperature of about 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The brief growing seasons range from 80 to 140 frost-free days. Most local soils are rather infertile and low in organic matter. Winter snowfall is heavy and the ground may be covered with snow for 100 to 140 days per year (Charles E. Cleland, "The Prehistoric Animal Ecology and Ethnozoology of the Upper Great Lakes Region," Anthropological Papers, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, No. 29, 1966, p. 9).

The region had heavy stands of trees surrounding inland lakes and streams. Forests of this biotic province were greatly affected by nearby large masses of water. Usually, the predominate trees were hardwoods, they were often intermixed with important sub-climax species. In some areas, a dominant tree species was the sugar maple, but yellow birch, red pine, aspen, and white pine were also common. Important regional sub-climaxes contained black spruce, tamarack, cedar, fir, white pine, white birch and alder which flourish on wet swampy ground (Ibid.).

A variety of mammals lived in this region. Prominent among them were white tailed deer, beaver, muskrat, snowshoe hare, and caribou. The caribou were herd animals who made trails between bodies of water and migrated on a seasonal basis. Less common, but present in some numbers, were elk and moose. Generally, these larger animals were easy to hunt as they could be seen and tracked. Moose for example, will often enter an area and linger there for a few days. Deer are far more evasive. Many avian species including the now extinct passenger pigeon, lived in this area. Waterfowl were abundant during the warmer months but difficult to secure without firearms except during the moulting season. Fish were not a dependable source of food in the large, deep lakes. It was a region of lake fishery rather than river fishery, and fishing in the main lakes could be called inland shore fishery. The best fishing was during the summer months though some fishing could be done during the winter. These factors did not allow for large food surpluses, and the biotic province could support only small groups of people who knew the local resources and who utilized them at the proper seasons. (Ibid, p. 10).

The local Ojibwe Indians used a "diffuse subsistence economy" to survive in this difficult environment. This simply means that they were well attuned to the local food resources and lived on them seasonally when they were available. In March or April they spent about a month in the sugarbush collecting and boiling maple sap down into sugar which could be stored. Then young men hunted large game animals and trapped. Relatively large summer villages grew in choice locations such as Thunder Bay, Pigeon Bay, and to a lesser extent at Grand Portage. Here, the Ojibwe could net or spear seasonally plentiful fish. Deer, moose, and caribou were also hunted. Wild fruits and other plant foods were usually plentiful in summer. Towards fall, families would move to good wild ricing areas to gather, process, and store this nutritious food. Large quantities of wild rice were saved for winter and spring consumption. Much of it was often traded to fur traders. Ducks were plentiful as they too, relished wild rice. Fish were usually netted and dried or frozen for winter consumption. Hunting and trapping occupied the men during the winter months. Towards spring, acute hunger and sometimes starvation were common if all food surpluses had been eaten and there was little to eat until the maple sugar season came (Alan R. and Nancy L. Woolworth, "Grand Portage National Monument, An Historical Overview and Inventory Of Its Cultural Resources," vol. 1, 1982, pp. 202-203).

### Prehistory

A scattering of Old Copper Culture artifacts and copper scrap have been found near the south eastern end of the portage on the shore of Lake Superior. These materials appear to date from c. 500 B.C. to 0 A.D. A single lanceolate projectile point, a large side notched point and numerous stone end scrapers point to a later occupation of the area and to big game hunting and hide processing. These items may date from c. 500 A.D. to 1500 A.D. A number of broken Micmac pipe bowls appear to date from the historic era (Alan R. Woolworth, "Archeological Excavations at Grand

Portage National Monument in 1962," pp. 43-44 & Plate 14, 1968 and Alan R. Woolworth, "Archeological Excavations at the North West Company's Depot, Grand Portage, Minnesota in 1970-1971," 1975, pp. 251-252 & Figure 52).

It is tempting to speculate that there are hundreds of prehistoric and historic Indian camps; French trader's camps; and perhaps even rude French trading establishments near the eastern portion of the Grand Portage Bay. They would have been left by Indian summer and fall visits to the area for trading, intertribal negotiations, or unrecorded French or British trading (Woolworth, 1968, pp. 43-44 & Plate 14 & Woolworth, 1975, pp. 251-252 & Figure 52).

### Indian Occupation

The Siouan speaking Santee Dakota Indians lived around the southern and western borders of Lake Superior until about 1720 and then gradually withdrew to the south and west under pressure from the Algonquian speaking Ojibwe who were expanding westward along the southern margins of this great lake. Bands of Ojibwe began to move westward from the outlet of Lake Superior at the Sault Ste. Marie during the 1670's. Initially, the southern Ojibwe moved along the southern shore of the lake to food rich locations such as Chequamegon Bay. Another group of these people moved slowly along the northern shore of Lake Superior. By about 1730, they were at Grand Portage Bay (Woolworth & Woolworth, pp. 179-180, 1982; Harold Hickerson, *The Chippewa and their Neighbors: A Study in Ethnohistory*, pp. 42-45, 1970 & Carolyn Gilman, *The Grand Portage Story*, 1992, p. 32).

The Grand Portage area was occupied by the Cree and Assiniboine tribes prior to the advent of the Ojibwe. These people withdrew north of Lake Superior and westward to Rainy Lake. The Lake of the Woods area was dominated by the Assiniboine, an offshoot of the Yanktonai Dakota. They were closely allied with the Cree and gradually moved westward to the Red River Valley (Harold Hickerson, "Land Tenure of the Rainy Lake Chippewa," *Smithsonian Contributions to Anthropology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1967, pp. 44-46 & 1736: *Census of Indian Tribes*, *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, vol. 17: 246-247, 1906)

### Indian Traders at Grand Portage

There is much information about the use of the Grand Portage by various Indian tribes, a practice that appears to date from the prehistoric era. Many Indians visited the locality to trade with other native peoples or with French or early British traders. Usually, they came to Grand Portage as it took far less time and canoe travel than to Hudson Bay. Further, the British goods from the Hudson's Bay Company were expensive. Astute traders themselves, the Indians wished to profit by dealing with competing traders. Hence, many of the northwestern tribes brought bales of dressed furs by canoe along the border lakes and streams to the Pigeon River. Then, they carried them down the portage to Grand Portage Bay on Lake Superior and began to dicker with traders. When traders were not at hand, Indians paddled their canoes to the Sault Ste. Marie, to Michilimackinac and even farther eastward (Parker, 1976, pp. 130 & 132).

In July, 1767, Jonathan Carver met and talked to Cree and Assiniboine Indians at Grand Portage. He also commented on their need for traders who would deal with them more fairly. There is much additional information in John Tanner's narrative concerning Indian use of the Grand Portage in the 1790's while hunting, trapping and for seasonal travels (Parker, 1976, pp. 130-131 & 191; Harold Innis, The Fur Trade In Canada, 1956, pp. 89-90 and Edwin James, ed., A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner, 1956, pp. xii, 19-27 & 50-53).

There is little information to inform us about Indian traders from the northwest traveling to Grand Portage after 1767. Perhaps those Ojibwe who brought canoes to Fort Charlotte from Rainy Lake went down the portage to see the great depot and to trade. It is also highly probable that Ojibwe from Thunder Bay to the eastward and even Lake Nipigon canoed to Grand Portage for trading. The gradual growth of the North West Company and its competitors brought trade goods directly to their Indian customers no matter where they lived. Essentially, these traders scoured the country in their relentless quest for furs. The comments of John Tanner in the 1790's demonstrate that his family traded at the North West Company depot. He claimed that the North West Company traders used liquor to induce his mother to store their furs in the Grand Portage depot and that the family was never paid for them (Hickerson, 1967, pp. 44-47; Parker, 1976, pp. 130-32 & James ed., 1956, p. 51).

Thus, the unique geology and geography of the Grand Portage provided a passage around the rough waters of the lower Pigeon River to connecting lakes and streams leading to the northwest. This long portage led from sheltered Grand Portage Bay upwards to the Pigeon River and climbed almost 700 feet in its course. The locality lay in a relatively rough landscape notable for its gravel and rock outcrops and long, harsh winters. Food resources were scanty and served to support a small population of Indian peoples who had existed in the area for some two thousand years or more.

Despite these drawbacks, the Grand Portage served as a passage to the northwest for long centuries leading into remote prehistoric times. The advent of Europeans to North America began a fur trade era in which beaver and other furs were exchanged for European manufactured goods. French traders ventured to the Grand Portage and were met by eager Indian customers who had traveled hundreds of miles to obtain these goods. In some measure, this trade continued at Grand Portage well into the British era.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2: Trade and Travel on the Grand Portage, 1731-1824

#### The French Presence at Grand Portage 1731-1760

The earliest written comments on the Grand Portage region originated with the French trader-explorers, missionary priests, and government officials who coasted along the northern shore of Lake Superior in the mid-seventeenth century.

There is a possibility that Pierre Esprit, sieur de Radisson, and his brother-in-law, Medard Chouart, sieur des Groseilliers, were in the Grand Portage vicinity about 1660. Given heavy fines for illegal trading, Radisson visited England and promoted a firm that became the great Hudson's Bay Company. Father Claude Allouez, a Jesuit missionary, canoed along the north shore of Lake Superior in 1667 and depicted the mouth of the Pigeon River on his 1670-71 map. A note on this map states that the Lake of the Assiniboines or Lake Winnipeg is 120 leagues to the northwest of Thunder Bay and the Pigeon River (Gilman, 1992, p. 32).

Daniel Greysolon, sieur du Luth, and his brother erected a small trading post at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River in 1679 and canoed along the north shore of Lake Superior to the site of Duluth. They passed by Grand Portage Bay and may have paused briefly, but left no written record (Kellogg, 1917, pp. 330-331).

Nearly 10 years later, in 1688, Jacques de Noyon ventured up the Kaministiquia River to Rainy Lake. There are no records to indicate that he visited the Grand Portage (Lawrence J. Burpee, Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier De Varennes, De La Verendrye, 1927, pp. 6-7.)

French fur trade in the west resumed in 1715. Two years later Zacharie Robutel de la Noue built a post at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River and traded with the Assiniboine and Cree tribes who had been attracted to British posts on Hudson Bay by better fur prices, cheaper trade goods and better quality cloth. French traders had the sole advantage of closer proximity to their customers. In 1722, a French official named Pachot reported that the best route to the west was thought to be the Pigeon or Nantokouagane River southwest of the Kaministiquia. This is the earliest known written mention of the Grand Portage route (Lawrence J. Burpee, The Search for the Western Sea, 1908, p. 202 & Gilman, 1992, p. 35.)

The recorded fur trade over the Grand Portage began with the immortal Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de La Verendrye. His career in the northwest commenced as commandant at the Kaministiquia outpost in 1726. Soon he was at Lake Nipigon where he met a Cree Indian named Auchagah who was well informed on regional geography. About 1729, he drew a map of the region for



La Verendrye (Map 2) which connected Lake Superior with the northwest via Kitchi Ongaming or the Great Carrying Place (Gilman, 1992, p. 35.)

On August 26, 1731, La Verendrye, landed at Grand Portage Bay with his sons; a nephew, sieur La Jemeraye; Father Mesaiger, a Jesuit; the indispensable Cree guide Auchagah; about forty voyageurs and 7 or 8 canoes. Encumbered by heavy packs and canoes, they started over the long portage but the men mutinied and demanded that they turn back. Only a few of them went on to Rainy Lake with La Jemeraye. La Verendrye and the remainder returned to the mouth of the Kamininstiqua River to winter. In June, 1732, La Verendrye returned to Grand Portage and went over it to the Lake of the Woods to build Fort St. Charles. Enroute, they "took great care to improve all the portages and waterways" and reduced them from forty-one to thirty-two. These measures improved travel, took less time, and reduced transportation costs (Burpee, 1927, pp. 131, & 437-438).

La Verendrye then engaged Cree Indians to escort Indian canoes to Grand Portage each spring and fall for trading. A long bloody conflict began between the Dakota and Ojibwe tribes in 1736. It led traders to use the safer northern route over the Grand Portage into the northwest. About the same time, a small group of Ojibwe reached the Grand Portage locality. From there they spread westward to Rainy Lake. The years 1740-1745 were the peak of the French fur trade era over the Grand Portage (Gilman, 1992, pp. 38-40.) La Verendrye and his family continued to use the Grand Portage route to the Northwest until c. 1750. They were succeeded by Jacques Legardeur, sieur de St. Pierre, who used the Grand Portage until 1753 (Gilman, 1992, pp. 36, 38-40 & Burpee, 1927, pp. 91, 436-38).

St. Pierre was succeeded by the Chevalier de La Corne. In 1754, the French and British began a war which spread to North America. La Corne is said to have closed the posts of the Sea of the West ("La Mer de l'Ouest") in 1755 and to have returned to Canada for service as a militia officer. Bougainville, another French official, listed seven trading posts in 1757 so they may have still been in operation. Voyageur's engagements and trading permits demonstrate that the French trade continued through 1759 (Bernard C. Payette, Old French Papers, 1966, pp. 300-305 & W.S. Wallace, The Pedlars from Quebec, 1954, p. 1.)

Data relative to the furs harvested during the French era are incomplete, but will be mentioned to give an idea of the number of packs taken over the Grand Portage. A total of 625 packs were gathered from the Sioux posts and La Mer de l'Ouest in 1735. In 1750 these posts produced 300 to 400 packs (Innis, 1956, p. 100.)

French Trade Licenses for the Northwest (1739-1760)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Person</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Canoes</u>	<u>Men</u>
1739	Ignace Gamelin	poste de L'Ouest	3	18
1739	" "	" " "	4	28

1740	" "	" " "	5	32
1743	Sieur Maugras	" " "	2	12
1743	" "	" " "	6	46
1745	" "	Lac Bourbon	3	20
1745	" "	Forts Maurepas & St. Charles	3	18
1745	" "	Forts La Reine & Dauphin	5	30
1745	Sieur Moniere	La la Pluie	2	12
1746	J. Huno	Mer de l'Ouest	1	5
1746	M. Laroche	" " "	1	6
1746	Pierre Royer	Lac la Pluie	1	6
1746	Sieur Maugras	" " "	4	20
1747	" "	Fort Dauphin	2	12
1747	" "	Mer de l'Ouest	2	12
1747	La Verendrye	" " "	4	24
1748	" "	Forts La Reine & Maurepas	4	24
1748	Ignace Gamelin	Forts La Reine & Maurepas	2	14
1748	G. Rupalais	Lac la Pluie & Lac du Bois	3	23
1749	" "	" " "	3	18
1749	Ignace Gamelin	Forts Maurepas & La Reine	2	12
1749	Sieur Maugras	Forts Dauphin & Bourbon	4	24
1751	Sieur L'Echelle	" " "	8	48
1752	" "	" " "	8	48
1753			3	17
1754			c.10	60
1755			c.8	33
1756			3	18
1757			8	52
1758			c.7	27
1759			3	18
1760			1	3

(Innis, 1956, pp. 94-95, 97-99, 101 & Payette, 1966, pp. 297-305).

In the early period of French trade, many traders entered the northwest without government licenses. Sporadic efforts were made to control the unlicensed "Coureurs de bois", but hundreds of young men roamed the woods for adventure and trading with Indians. Doubtless, some of them entered Grand Portage Bay and used the portage to enter the northwest. There are unfortunately, few written records concerning them or their activities (Nute, Grace Lee, The Voyageur, 1955, pp. 24, 63-66; The Voyageur's Highway; & Innis, 1956, pp. 59-63 & 66-69).

#### British Traders at Grand Portage, 1761-1805

British arms and supplies triumphed over the French on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. Enterprising British and Scottish merchants moved swiftly

from New York into the moribund fur trade. Alexander Henry the Elder ventured to Michilimackinac, the gateway to Lake Superior, in 1761 under the tutelage of an experienced French trader. Soon he went into partnership with J.B. Cadotte, a trader at the Sault Ste. Marie, and began trading to Grand Portage and into the Northwest. This combination of French experience, British capital and trade goods led to success. Traditionally, the British flag had followed its commerce; such was the case now. Thompson Maxwell enlisted in a company of Rangers and went to Michilimackinac in October, 1761. In late May, 1762, his unit escorted British traders and their goods along the north shore of Lake Superior to Grand Portage (Thompson Maxwell, "Narrative," Wisconsin Historical Collections, vol. 11, 1888, pp. 213-215).

The Pontiac War disrupted trade and saw the capture of the British garrison and plundering of traders at Michilimackinac by Ojibwe Indians. Alexander Henry survived through the aid of French and Indian friends (James Bain, editor, Travels and Adventures In Canada and the Indian Territories Between the Years 1760 and 1776, 1901, pp. 47-48.) In 1765, Henry obtained an exclusive license for the Lake Superior trade and sent out four canoes and twelve men. Unhindered by competition, he gained a fortune in beaver pelts (Innis, 1956, p. 168.)

British fur traders gained permission in 1767 to winter among the Indians in the northwest. Fourteen canoes paddled by an unknown number of voyageurs went over the Grand Portage with trade goods valued at slightly more than 5,000 British pounds and returned with 100 canoes laden with beaver pelts. Jonathan Carver visited Grand Portage in the summer of 1767 and saw the arrival and departure of traders over the portage. Carver also noted the presence of Cree and Assiniboine Indians along with local Ojibwe. Even at that date, it was an important fur trade rendezvous (Charles E. Lart, "Fur Trade Returns, 1767," Canadian Historical Review, vol. 3, pp. 351-358 & Parker, 1976, pp. 130-132).

Large Montreal canoes were used to carry trade goods and supplies to Grand Portage at an early date. By 1772, Lawrence Ermatinger suggested that the idle Montreal voyageurs be used to transport goods over the Grand Portage to the Pigeon River. By 1773 these men were required to carry six pieces across the portage and returning to carry bales of furs down the portage to the lakeside depot. Alert Hudson's Bay Company employees watched the British traders flow into the northwest and commented on their methods of transportation to and over the Grand Portage. By 1775, 60 north canoes laden with trade goods from the Grand Portage, were competing with the HBC men in the northwest (Erwin W. Thompson, Grand Portage: The Great Carrying Place, 1969, p. 24; W.S. Wallace, ed., Documents Relating to the North West Company, 1934, pp. 39, 41 & 44-45 & J.B. Tyrrell, ed., Journals of Hearne and Turnor, 1934, pp. 121-123).

On June 10, 1775, Alexander Henry left the Sault at the east end of Lake Superior with provisions and trade goods valued at 3,000 pounds sterling. He took precautions by carrying large quantities of provisions for food would be scarce in the northwest. The goods were in twelve small canoes

with three men each and four larger canoes manned by four men. He hired two experienced men at Grand Portage and had 54 men in his brigade. They reached Grand Portage on June 28th and began the arduous labor of carrying canoes, provisions and trade goods over the portage. This required seven days of "severe and dangerous exertion." In the following year (1776) a total of 70 north canoes with cargoes valued at 49,000 British pounds were in the northwest (Bain, 1901, pp. 233-36 & Reuben G. Thwaites, ed. "Trade in the Upper Country," Wisconsin Historical Collections, vol. 12, 1892, pp. 41-42) & W. S. Wallace, ed. The Pedlars From Quebec, p. 54, 1954).

Large scale British trade to the northwest by the Grand Portage appears to have begun in 1775 when James McGill, Benjamin Frobisher and Maurice Blondeau sent 12 canoes with 3 guides and 75 men to the portage. Other figures indicate that 41 canoes went to the Grand Portage in 1775 with 241 men. In 1776, traders to the rich Athabasca country obtained 12,000 beaver pelts, and large numbers of otter and marten furs. In 1778 conditions made it essential for nine traders or sets of partners to form a "North West Company" with its assets divided into sixteen shares. The benefits of a large well organized firm with skilled managers and an ample supply of capital were obvious to the canny Scottish fur traders. By 1776 Grand Portage had supplanted Michilimackinac as the advanced supply depot for the northwest fur trade. John Askin at Mackinac shipped bulky cargoes such as barrels of rum and bags of dried corn by sailing vessels over Lake Superior to Grand Portage. By 1781, a group of Montreal traders prepared a memorial to Frederic Haldimand in which they requested large supplies of corn and other provisions for the growing north west trade (Wayne E. Stevens, "Fur Trade Licenses," Minnesota Historical Society Archives; Innis, 1956, pp. 193-95 & 197; E.E. Rich, Montreal and the Fur Trade, pp. 71-72; "Trade In The Lake Superior Country In 1778," Michigan Historical Collections, vol. 19, pp.337-339) & 620-621 & Milo M. Quaife, ed., The John Askin Papers, vol. 1:90-98, Detroit, 1928).

The North West Company reorganized in 1784 under Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher. By 1785 the firm would have an investment of 50,000 pounds, original cost in furs at Grand Portage. Two sets of men were engaged with one half employed in the transport of goods from Montreal to the Grand Portage and the other half used to carry the goods into the northwest. The North West Company then had about 500 men employed in this trade. In 1785 the firm sent 25 canoes and 4 batteaus with 276 men to Detroit and the Grand Portage. By 1786 the numbers had increased to 30 canoes and 300 men (Thompson, 1969, pp. 40-42 & Innis, 1956, pp. 214 & 253).

Dynamic Benjamin Frobisher expended large sums of money c. 1784-1787 to build a large inland fur trade depot fronting on Grand Portage Bay. About the same time Frobisher appears to have enlarged an older facility at the upper end of the portage; it was known as Fort Charlotte. This structure was for the storage of materials essential for the northwest trade. These items included provisions, equipment, supplies, and undoubtedly a large number of birch bark north canoes. Efforts were made to keep a year's supply of lyed corn and grease on hand at the upper end of the portage. The canoes were made by local Indians or purchased from Rainy

Lake Ojibwe Indians and kept until needed. Their normal use was for only one year. During this same period, the smaller firms of Gregory, McLeod & Co. and Todd, McGill & Co. appear to have erected storage facilities at the upper end of the portage. The portage must have been busier than usual during these years (Innis, 1956, p. 232; Lamb, 1970, p. 97 & Thompson, 1969, pp. 46-50).

Although no records appear to have survived, it is probable that the dominant North West Company kept the Grand Portage in repair by using forced voyageur labor. This practise required each voyageur to donate a day of his labor to the company. There are some indications of corduroy logs being placed in muddy spots and of log bridges being laid over streams. An inventory of goods at Grand Portage dated June, 1787, lists: "6 horses, a 3 year old colt, 5 cows, 1 bull, 2 oxen, 2 calves, 6 sheep." Alexander Mackenzie provided a footnote to this experiment by noting in the late 1790's that oxen were not of much use on the portage even in summer months. Both horses and oxen had been tried but with little success. Draft animals had been found useful only for light, bulky articles, or for pulling sledges during the winter months. In winters, they were used to convey provisions and some trade goods from the depot on up the portage to Fort Charlotte at the Pigeon River (Innis, 1956, p. 232n & Lamb, 1970, p. 97).

Benjamin Frobisher died in mid-April, 1787 and was succeeded by Simon McTavish who formed a partnership with the Frobisher firm. This concern was reorganized into a company that dominated the North West Company during the remainder of its existence. Gregory & McLeod also joined this enlarged firm (Innis, 1956, pp. 199-200).

In 1788 Simon McTavish and Joseph Frobisher as agents for the North West Company asked for a grant of land an acre in width from Lake Superior to Long Lake in order to build a wagon road. This would "obviate the need of using one hundred men at the portage." Their request was denied by the Provincial Administrative Council. Thus monopoly control over the Grand Portage was averted (Gordon C. Davidson, The North West Company, 1918, pp. 23 & 49).

In the 1750's a British cartographer named Mitchell drew a map depicting the Lake of the Woods draining southeastward to Lake Superior through a large river with an estuary called "Long Lake." Diplomats at the close of the American Revolution used this map for boundary negotiations. The "Long Lake" error survived to confuse boundary surveys between Great Britain and the United States into the 1820's. Montreal traders knew that "Long Lake" was really the deep mouth of the Pigeon River, but quibbled to keep their hold on the Grand Portage (William E. Lass, Minnesota's Boundary With Canada, 1988, pp. 14-17).

The North West Company continued to grow and prosper well into the 1790's. The volume of trade goods carried over the portage and taken into the northwest enlarged year after year as did the quantities of furs from the Red River, the Saskatchewan, and the Athabasca Country. The remarkable

geographical discoveries of Peter Pond and Alexander Mackenzie pointed the way for this expansion. Mackenzie's epochal exploration across country to the Pacific Ocean in 1793 and his subsequent history of the fur trade gained him lasting fame and a title. In 1792, a large group of northwest traders signed a memorial in which they emphasised their concern over the loss of the Grand Portage (Lamb, ed., 1970, pp. 1, 14-22 & 32-37 & Thompson, 1969, pp. 54-55 & "Memorial of Montreal Merchants Respecting Trade," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, vol. 24, pp. 402-409, 1895).

There are no complete accounts of the packs of furs obtained in the northwest by the North West Company. Joseph Hadfield wrote that 700 packs of furs were collected and taken through Grand Portage c. 1785. Each pack was valued at 40 pounds sterling and the total amounted to 28,000 pounds. Count Andriani may have voyaged to Grand Portage in 1791. His journal states that 1,400 packs of fine furs (beaver, otter, marten and wild cat) from the northwest came through the Grand Portage in that year. These peltries had a value of 88,000 British pounds. These packs would have all been carried down the Grand Portage to the North West Company depot on Lake Superior (Hadfield, 1933, p. 109 & "La Rochefoucault-Liancourt's Travels in Canada 1795," Thirteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1916, pp. 110 & 113).

Another view of the growth of the North West Company's returns of furs can be gained by their valuation between 1784 and 1799 (Lamb, 1970, pp. 25 & 80):

1784-1787	30,000 pounds sterling
1788	40,000 " "
1789	53,000 " "
1790-1795	72,000 " "
1796-1798	98,000 " "
1799	120,000 " "

Still another measure of the growth of trade through the Grand Portage can be found in the number of men at the annual rendezvous in early July of each year: In January of 1778, an official memorandum stated that nearly 500 men were employed in the northwest trade (Davidson, 1918, p. 18).

In 1784, Joseph Frobisher reported that the North West Company employed two sets of men, who numbered about 500. One half of them or 250 were used to transport trade goods from Montreal to the Grand Portage. The other set were hired to take the goods into the northwest. By the mid 1790's 350 canoe men were engaged to transport these goods. (Innis, 1956, pp. 213-14; Davidson, 1918, p. 229 & Lamb, 1970, p. 97-98).

Despite its growth and continued prosperity, the North West Company had lived under a shadow since the Treaty of Paris in 1783 which officially closed the American Revolutionary War. American negotiators had obtained a boundary line running from the Atlantic Ocean to the northwest point of the Lake of the Woods. As the years went by it became more certain that the

Americans would own the crucial Grand Portage. If British traders were excluded from this route, they would be forced to find another waterway to the northwest (Gilman, 1992, pp. 74-75).

By 1795, the older partners in the firm realized that they must grant concessions to younger partners, and also deal with continued competition from other firms. In 1797 a rival firm known as the XY Company emerged. Alexander Mackenzie later joined it, and fought for survival against Simon McTavish. During the summer of 1797 an Indian informant told a North West Company officer about a route to the northwest along the Kaministiquia River. This route had been used by Indians for generations and also by early French traders before the Grand Portage was developed into the major entrepot to the northwest. Then it fell into disuse and was unknown to British traders. This discovery solved the problem of access to the northwest and led to the swift abandonment of the Grand Portage by the North West Company. A decision to move northeast up Lake Superior to undoubted British territory at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River in present day Thunder Bay was made at the 1799 rendezvous at Grand Portage. Detailed accounts by former North West Company partners and employees state that the great depot on Grand Portage Bay was abandoned because it was in the United States. North West Company men believed that the young, aggressive country would collect customs duties on trade goods taken there (Martin Van Buren, *Boundary Between The United States And Great Britain*, Document No. 451, U.S. Serial No. 331 & Thompson, 1969, p. 86).

Construction at the new North West Company headquarters at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River in Thunder Bay began in 1801 and continued to c. 1807. Company personnel and supplies were moved to Thunder Bay in 1801 and 1802. By 1804 the North West Company facilities at Grand Portage were removed or demolished. The legendary Grand Portage lapsed into obscurity and only casual use. British trade licenses for the northwest were issued annually. The entries below show the number of licenses for each year between 1767 and 1787; but those from 1788-1802 are not available. The extant number of canoes, the number of men paddling them and the value of the materials being carried to the Grand Portage are listed in these documents (Innis, 1956, pp. 189-198 & 253):

British Trade Licenses for the Northwest, 1767-1787

<u>Year</u>	<u>Licenses</u>	<u>Canoes</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Value</u>
1767		14		5117 pounds
1769	3	5	34	2150
1770	7	11		3686
1772	6	13		5842
1773	3	8	51	1750 +
1774	5	21	154	4000
1775	8	41	241	3000
1777	7	37	216 +	11700

1778	8	43		
1779	9	26		
1780	9	39		
1781	14	31		
1782	12	29		
1783		15		
1785		33	350	26125
1786		38	383	30000
1787		34	340	26700

**British & American Boundary Surveys, 1822-1824**

With the close of the British fur trade at Grand Portage, the locality lapsed into a period of quiet and little recorded events. A renewed interest in the region came with the boundary surveys between the youthful United States and British North America during the early 1820's. These surveys brought talented scientific men to the area who passed over the Grand Portage, measured and mapped it and recorded their impressions of this historic location. We owe much to their labors and dedication.



### Chapter 3

#### Chapter 3: Trails, Portages and Roads at Grand Portage

A series of eleven portages, trails, and roads are known to be closely associated within the Grand Portage locale. Approximately one half of these features have prehistoric origins and long predate the advent of the white man. All of them existed for one basic purpose -- to facilitate travel over a relatively rough country from one place to another. Thus, they were tied to the daily needs of the Indian peoples of the Grand Portage region. Most of these trails led from the village to locations with seasonal food resources. They were of course highly important to the subsistence cycle. The Ojibwe people placed great reliance on water borne transportation and land routes were often only connecting links in their network of water routes. More concise data concerning features of the Grand Portage Trail itself are listed alphabetically in a portion of this report at the end of Chapter 7 entitled, "Place Names Associated with the Portage." Map No. 19 lists most of the trails on the Grand Portage Reservation.

Best known of course is the age old "Great Carrying Place" or Grand Portage that bypassed the rough waters of the lower Pigeon River and connected a favored landing spot on a sheltered bay with the Pigeon River above its worst obstacles. Widely known as the premier travel route in the region, it was depicted on most maps of the area from the French era into modern times. This portage would appear to be associated with the development of the light, portable birch bark canoe. It is of course the basic theme of this study and is dealt with repeatedly in other portions of this report.

Partridge Falls Portage was the first portage on the water route westwards from the upper end of the Grand Portage; it provided a detour around Partridge Falls. In all probability, this portage was initially associated with the development of the Grand Portage and the use of the Pigeon River water route to the northwest. Its course is shown on the Charles L. Emerson map of the local Indian reservation made in 1858 (Map 9). It is also depicted on the many General Land Office surveys of the region between 1858 and 1893.

The Sugar Bush Trail originated north of Mount Rose near the bay and led west to a well known maple sugar camp on the shores of Speckled Trout Lake. Its earliest known route is also on the Charles L. Emerson map of 1858 where it was merely indicated as an "Indian Trail" leading from the Grand Portage village to an "Indian Sugar Camp." Its course is also shown on a map drawn by Newton H. Winchell, ca. 1893, (Map 12) and here it is designated only as a portage. Another map of about the same period shows its route, but does not name it. This trail may well be linked with the early occupation of the Indian village on Grand Portage Bay.

Another trail of considerable antiquity is the Mount Josephine Trail. It began a short distance east of the Grand Portage village and after crossing

over Mount Josephine, turned to the shoreline of Waus-wau-gon-ing Bay. From there, it was possible to travel to other bays along Lake Superior, and to Pigeon Point. The earliest known drawing of its route is on the 1868 map of the North Shore of Lake Superior by Rogers and Molitor. It is also shown on the W. S. Bayley map of 1891 (Map 11); the Newton H. Winchell map of Pigeon Point dating from 1893; and the U.S. General Land Office maps.

The Clark's Bay Trail ran from the vicinity of Parkerville on the Pigeon River southward to the shores of this inlet in the Lake Superior coastline. It is also shown on a number of U.S. General Land Office maps and the W. S. Bayley map of 1891 (Map 11).

Another route of considerable antiquity is the Little Portage that passed from an indentation on the south side of Pigeon Point, over a ridge, and to Pigeon Bay on the north side of the point. It appears to have been used by local Indians during high winds.

Still another well known trail is the Hudson's Bay or Fort William Trail which may be prehistoric. It runs from the northeastern edge of Grand Portage village, over Mount Josephine and north of Waus-wau-gon-ing Bay to the mouth of the Pigeon River and Pigeon Bay which contained many food resources. The remainder of its route to Fort William may relate to the Earl of Selkirk's activities in 1816 to build a winter road from Fort William to Grand Portage. It is shown on the General Land Office maps and on many modern maps (Gilman, 1992, pp. 102, 150-1).

The Mission Trail dates from the 1840's and ran from Waus-wau-gon-ing Bay to the Roman Catholic Mission of the Pigeon River. It may have been used for only a few short years. It could, however, had served as a convenient route to the trading post at Parkerville on the Pigeon River in the 1860's. This trail is depicted on the W. S. Bayley map of 1891 (Map 11) and the Winchell map of 1893 (Map 12).

The North Shore Mail Route or Old Dog Trail which connected Duluth with Fort William may well be descended from an old lakeshore trail. The mail route was started about 1856, and is shown on many maps such as the Winchell map of 1893. It developed into Minnesota Highway No. 1 as an all weather road by 1925. (It is now known as Highway No. 61).

The Silver Mountain Trail was begun about 1885 by packers who used Grand Portage village as a base to transport supplies overland from Lake Superior inland to newly discovered mines about 40 miles away in Ontario. This route is shown on the General Land Office maps and the Winchell map of 1893.

A far more recent travel route is the Cascades Trail which branched off from the Grand Portage a short distance east of its upper end, and went directly to the scenic cascades on the Pigeon River. It was well known in 1920's and may date from the logging era in the early 20th century. Later, it was popular with fishermen and sight-seers.

Perhaps it is significant to speculate on the ages of these various trails. The lakeshore route leading from Grand Portage Bay to the Pigeon River and Thunder Bay may well be at least two thousand or more years old. It is probable that it was used by migrating bands of Indians far back in the prehistoric era and it may well have originated long before the development of the birchbark canoe.

The more localized trails leading to specialized food production areas such as the Sugarbush trail, would appear to be newer than the preceding lakeshore trail. At present, we can only speculate on the date of maple sugar production, but it was dependent on a number of technological innovations such as pottery vessels and long experimentation in boiling maple sap down into the sugar form. Wild rice as a food resource also required a number of sequential technological developments and perhaps a long period of time to devise them.

Some relatively short portages may have been used for small wooden dugout canoes. They could have also been developed by prehistoric Indians who kept these canoes at both ends of a portage and who walked overland with their belongings on a seasonal basis.

Many of these travel routes are shown on a map of "The Grand Portage Triangle" (Map 16) that accompanies the 1931 reprinting of The Story of the Grand Portage by Solon J. Buck. Most of these features are also on the accompanying (Map 1) from Aguar, Jyring & Whiteman, Tourist And Recreational Resources, Grand Portage Indian Reservation, Minnesota, 1963). (A complete list of the known place names along the Grand Portage Trail can be found on pages 95-99).

## Chapter 4

### Chapter 4: Historic Routes and Alignments of the Portage

While at Grand Portage during the summer of 1778, British Lieutenant Thomas Bennett laid out a public roadway from the lakeshore canoe landing site east of Grand Portage Creek and proceeded an unknown distance northward. He may have connected this road to a ford across the creek. It was probably necessary to cut down trees, remove stumps, and boulders, and to fill in low spots with dirt or wood. It is also possible that this party built a small wooden bridge over Grand Portage Creek. Traces of a ford and roadway can be still seen on the east bank of the creek about 120 feet north of the eastern end of the stone bridge (built c. 1940) which spans this stream (Nancy L. Woolworth, "Grand Portage in the Revolutionary War," Minnesota History, 44(6):199-208).

Young John Macdonell also mentioned this road in 1793. Then the North West Company "North men" or "winterers" from each post lived in camps in an open area east of the mouth of Grand Portage Creek. He commented: "... and through their camp passes the road of the portage," ("The Diary of John Macdonell," in: Gates, Five Fur Traders of the Northwest, 1965, p. 93).

The "Public Road" was a local landmark in 1802 and was mentioned in a British legal case as being a short distance east of the mouth of the Grand Portage Creek and near the shore of Lake Superior. Daniel Sutherland, a former North West Company partner, testified in court on this subject in these words:

...there is a public road that passes in the open space between the two forts above mentioned to the North side of the portage, and that a Cart may pass in the said Road from the Beach to the little River, which Road was made before the deponent went to the Grand Portage, by the former North West Company as the deponent believes (Woolworth & Woolworth, 1982, pp. 164-169; Nute, 1940, pp. 137-139).

In the period from ca. 1784 to 1787, dynamic Benjamin Frobisher, expended great sums of money for the erection of a large fur trade depot. This was apparently the genesis or perhaps the culmination of the North West Company depot at Grand Portage into its completed form and with the dimensions which the reconstructed depot has today. During this same time period, there can be little doubt but that the dominant North West Company built or enlarged its facilities at the upper end of the Grand Portage into what became known as Fort Charlotte. During this same period, Gregory, McLeod and Company; and Todd, McGill & Company appear to have erected buildings at the upper end of the Grand Portage (Thompson, 1969, p. 46-47).

Benjamin Frobisher died in mid-April of 1787 and was succeeded by Simon McTavish who formed a partnership with the Frobisher firm. This was reorganized into the combination which dominated the North West Company for

the remainder of its existence. Gregory & McLeod also joined this enlarged firm (Innis, 1956, pp. 199-200).

At about the same time, the North West Company applied for a grant of land along the Grand Portage and imported draft animals consisting of oxen and horses to haul wagons over this route. An increased reliance was also placed upon the use of sailing vessels on Lake Superior to transport bulky cargoes of foodstuffs and trade goods to Grand Portage. Although no records appear to have survived, it is very probable that the dominant North West Company kept the portage in repair and expended forced voyageur labor to improve it. This practice required each voyageur to donate one or two days of labor to the company during their terms of employment. Usually this work was used for construction around a fur trade depot. There are some indications of logs being placed in muddy locations and bridges being placed over streams (Innis, 1956, p. 231 & Winchell, p. 504, 1899).

Major Joseph Delafield led an American survey party to the Grand Portage in July of 1822 for an official study of the boundary between the United States and the British possessions. The Major described the portaging process so well that he is quoted here:

[July 10, 1822]

. . . Arrive at Grand Portage at 7:p.m. A day of fatigue, laboring and confused in fogs & uncertainties has made all glad to arrive & anxious to encamp, which we soon do on the old company's ground, burning & pulling down Indian wigwams to boil our pots (Robert McElroy and Thomas Riggs, eds. The Unfortified Boundary A Diary of the first survey of the Canadian Boundary Line from St. Regis to the Lake of the Woods by Major Joseph Delafield, 1943, p. 404).

[July 11, 1822]

At sunrise the men have carried most of the baggage one post and I have notice that the Marquee & its furniture will be wanted for the next load. Taking an early breakfast whilst the men are eating theirs, I set off with the last load, carrying my own travelling bag, and stone hammer. The whole is carried two posts, when the rain obliges me to encamp. The corn and bread had already been considerably exposed by carrying it that far thro' the wet bushes. These two first posts are very bad. There is a considerable ascent, and where it is not rock, it is mud; and the old road is so closed with a young growth of trees and bushes, that it is difficult to carry anything the size of a canoe piece without injury, if there has been dew or rain, and to carry the canoe is still more difficult (Ibid., pp. 404-405).

My establishment requires three trips for baggage and one for the canoe. The mode of carrying is by a portage collar, so called, which is a long leather strap with a broad band in the center to place on the forehead. The load is tied by the ends of it, the band placed on the forehead, & by stooping the man throws the one piece

tied into the hollow of his back, his hands then being at liberty, he throws another piece on top of it which fills up the load to the back of his head, bending forward, he takes it over his post on a slow trot, a very fast walk with bended knees. The two pieces are carried with more ease than one, on account of the direction of the weight upon the body, and two sacks of corn (which is three bushels), or a keg of pork (96 lbs.) & a sack or two kegs, is the common load. A man will, when he pleases however, carry three pieces, but it is not required of them. The Canadians surpass all others upon the portage. My American of the party was very awkward at first, but soon carried light loads with ease, and it soon proved that in no other manner, so great a weight could be carried on the portage as by the collar (Ibid., p. 405).

[July 12, 1822]. Continue to labor on the Grand Portage; the road very bad, from the rain of yesterday. Keep most of the time by the men. At night arrive with all the luggage at the second river that crosses the road & encamp, the canoe being advanced several posts beyond. At this place is a little clearing now covered with high grass. It has every appearance of having been the common stopping place of the traders who formerly used the route. . . . Consider the distance come this day to be about one third of the portage (Ibid).

[July 13, 1822]  
Spend the day in hard work crossing the portage. I advance before the men to the third river & encourage them to get that far with the baggage; but they stop for the night at a little mud hole called a spring, that filled our kettles once only & was only sufficient for the night. The canoe is sent to the river. The road from river to river has proved very much better than the first part. It is level and without rocks. The evening has every appearance of being most delightful out of the woods, but, hem'd in by bushes & trees and annoyed by musquitoes, there is no enjoyment of it here (Ibid., pp. 405-406).

[July 14, 1822].  
Encamp at the Pigeon River in the afternoon & the men have all things up by four o'clock, thus having passed the Grand Portage in three full day's work, and one broken day, it being rainy (Ibid).

. . . At this end of the Grand Portage, as at the other, there is scarcely a trace remaining of its former condition except the cleared ground. A few stumps of burnt pickets assist in tracing the extent of the former enclosures, and that is all. . . . Fir trees and white birch are the only trees of the adjacent country.

The landing place or dock of the old North West Co. is still entire and affords some accomodation (Ibid.).

Although the route was bad because of rain on the previous day, the party continued over the portage. After crossing Grand Portage Creek, they were able to carry all of their luggage to the second stream which ran across the portage. Here, they camped. The canoe was several poses ahead. A little clearing covered with tall grass existed at the "second river" where they spent the night. Delafield believed it to be an old stopping place or pose from the fur trade era. Here, a single Indian enroute to Fort William, passed them. Calculations were made that they had come about one-third of the portage this day (Ibid., pp. 405-06).

On Sunday, July 13th, the Major went ahead of the men to "the third river" and encouraged them to get that far with the baggage, but they halted to spend the night at ". . . a little mud hole called a spring." The canoe had been carried on to the Pigeon River. The portage between the second and third rivers had been much better than the first segment for it was level and without rocks. At this last camp, the party was hemmed in by bushes and tormented by mosquitos (Ibid.).

On the following day, July 14th, they were at last over the portage and camped at the Pigeon River with all of their baggage by 4:00 P.M. Thus, they had passed over the Grand Portage by three full day's work and one broken day of rain (Ibid., pp. 404-406).

Delafield's progress can be studied in detail with the aid of a map of the Grand Portage which was prepared in 1822 by George W. Whistler in the course of the official boundary survey (Map 6).

The next reasonably detailed account of traversing the portage was written by Dr. John Bigsby, a British physician who accompanied the British boundary survey party in 1822.

We left Lake Superior on the 29th of June, (1822) and walked over woody hills and waded through swampy bottoms to the west end of the portage (eight miles and one-sixth), greatly annoyed by mosquitoes, and the closeness of the air, the path, such as it was, being overgrown by briars and coppice. The trees were sometimes large, and the fruits were in blossom (Bigsby, 1850, Vol. 2, p. 241).

Almost a generation elapsed before the next recorded crossing of the portage. David Dale Owen, an Anglo-American geologist, led a survey party to the north shore of Lake Superior in 1849. They made a detailed study of the Pigeon River Bay and then moved along the lake shore into Grand Portage Bay. Notes were made concerning the ancient beach levels of Lake Superior at Grand Portage. One beach was about a hundred yards inland from the lake; the other about three hundred more yards inland. The party camped at the "commencement of the Grand Portage Trail" and later ascended it to Fort Charlotte but left few observations other than brief comments on tree species in the locality. There was a heavy growth of large poplars and white birch in the slate valleys (David Dale Owen, Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, 1852, pp. 396, 400, & 408).

Although this route continued to be used somewhat, there are no further records of its use until 1858 when the British explorer, S. J. Dawson, used it. He cryptically commented that it was "passable," but provided no further details (Dawson, 1859, pp. 3, 7, 8).

A considerable amount of data concerning the Grand Portage was recorded by members of the expedition which explored a water route from Lake Superior to the Red River in May-June of 1858. J. A. Dickinson, a civil engineer, was favorably impressed by the route and obtained information concerning it from an "old voyageur" (J.A. Dickinson, "Additional Remarks on the Pigeon River Route," in Hind, Henry Y., Papers Relative to the Exploration of the Country Between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement, 1859, pp. 201-202).

These are some of the reasons for my preferring the route by the lakes to the Kaministiquia and Riviere La Seine route; the others being that it is shorter by several miles, that the portages on it are better, and lastly that it passes through a country bearing superior timber (Ibid.)

. . . This for a long period of years was the route travelled by the old voyageurs, and was only given up, I understand, on account of the length of the Grand Portage, which was supposed to have had a bad effect on the spirits of the men, occurring as it did at the commencement of their journey. I may remark, in confirmation of my opinion, that our guide, who was with us on both routes, and who had some 40 journeys between Lake Superior and Red River, said he much preferred the Pigeon River route to any other, and how could there be a person better qualified for being a judge than he?" (Ibid., pp. 201-02).

Grand Portage Bay, where formerly was the chief depot of the North West Company, affords a sufficiently safe harbour or small vessels, being very shallow, however for some distance out the shore."

At the head of the bay commences the Grand Portage, which is eight miles thirteen chains in length; without any difficulty and with very little expense it might be made suitable for waggons, but at present it is only a rough footpath. As it and Grand Portage Bay are altogether within the United States territory, it is perhaps needless to propose any improvements that might be made in them. This portage is unavoidable, as the Pigeon River, for sixteen miles from its mouth, is quite unnavigable, from the numerous falls and rapids in it (J.A. Dickinson 1859. "Mr. Dickinson's Report On The Pigeon River Route." In Hind, 1859, pp. 4-5).

Henry Youle Hind, leader of the expedition, did not fully share Dickinson's enthusiasm for the Grand Portage, but perhaps this is understandable in view of his experience. His party started out to cross the Grand Portage on May 5th, and required five days to move their equipment across it. In Hind's words:



When we started from the east end of the Grand Portage the baggage of the expedition weighed considerably over 6,000 pounds, and the labor of carrying it, in addition to the canoes, over the portage, was necessarily great, and occasioned severe sores on the shoulders of some of the men (Hind, 1860, pp. 14-16 & 201).

.....

The Grand Portage, made to overcome the falls of the Pigeon River, 120 feet high, has been often cited as the chief obstruction to the Pigeon River route. Its length is 8 miles, 15 chains. The road is dry, and in comparison with some of the portages on the Kaministiquia route, in good condition. It is passable for an ox team, in charge of the American trading post in forwarding their supplies (Ibid.).

I endeavored to procure the ox cart and team to transfer the heavy baggage from the east to the west end of the portage, but although the cart was available the team was not, one ox having died during the winter, and the other was in such miserable condition that he could scarcely draw the cart itself (Ibid.).

The passage of the Grand Portage consequently occupied five days instead of two, and in making a comparison between the two canoe routes to Lake Winnipeg these facts must be borne in mind . . . . (Ibid.).

British engineers made another study of water routes and portages between Lake Superior and the Red River in 1870. Comments were made that the Pigeon River Route was 43 miles shorter than the Kaministiquia Route and was said to be easier, but it was in American territory. This information is quoted:

#### PIGEON RIVER ROUTE.

The portages on this route are chiefly on the American side of the frontier line. Grand Portage Bay affords a sufficiently safe harbour for small vessels, being very shallow, however, for some distance out from the shore.

At the head of the bay commences the Grand Portage, which is 8 miles 13 chains in length; without any difficulty and very little expense it might be made suitable for waggons, but at present it is only a rough foot-path. As it and Grand Portage Bay are altogether within the United States territory, it is perhaps needless to propose any improvements that might be made in them. . . . An ox team is employed by the Americans in forwarding supplies (Colonel Crofton and Captain (now General) Lefroy, Notes on the Routes From Lake Superior To The Red River, and On The Settlement Itself. London: Printed at the War Office, pp. 3-4, 1870).

Minnesota's veteran State Geologist, Newton H. Winchell, studied and traversed the Grand Portage during the course of a geological survey of the region in 1893. Fortunately, he was interested in the portage and left a record of his observations. In 1893, he noted: "In its present degener-

ated state, this is still a good road, except where the bridges over the streams have not been renewed. . . many American and Canadian parties passed over it until the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (about 1885). It will soon be a mere Indian trail, obstructed by brush and fallen trees" (Winchell, 1899, pp. 504-505).

More specifically, he noted that the portage ascended a grade as it left the Grand Portage village and that it followed Grand Portage Creek for about a mile and a half before leaving the valley of this stream. High hills rose on either side of the portage to the north of the village and along the course of the stream. Thereafter, the route curved to the northwest. At a distance of 3 miles, the portage crossed Poplar River. Here, the stream valley had cut about 50 feet into non-terraced deposits. At this point, the passage way was 498 feet above Lake Superior. The ascent to a point about one-half mile south of the stream crossing was gradual over a deposit of smooth glacial till. Next, there was a level tract of about one-half mile of red glacial clay which had once been heavily timbered (Ibid, p. 505).

After passing a notch in the range of hills, the portage descended about 70 feet to the Poplar River and continued over a mile-wide glacial plain which rose towards the northwest. The portage followed this plain and soon rose west of the Poplar River crossing to the highest point on the route, a height of 743 feet above the lake, or 1,345 above sea level. This was at a location about 5 miles northwest of the Grand Portage village. This is a clay covered plain which rises nearly as high as the hills further south, but it is enclosed by nearby hills which rise 200 or 300 feet higher than the plain. At a mile and a quarter southeast of the Pigeon River, the portage passed over a low bluff of gray trap rock (Ibid.).

Cecil W. Shirk, field secretary for the Minnesota Historical Society, came to the sleepy village of Grand Portage on July 10, 1922 at the direction of Solon J. Buck, Superintendent of the Society, with the intent of exploring the Grand Portage and Fort Charlotte. He recorded many observations which are now summarized (Cecil W. Shirk, "Report on Expedition To Grand Portage, July 10, 1922," Minnesota Historical Society Archives).

The start of the portage was easy to find as about 2 miles of it had been cleared in anticipation of a possible highway. The route was a wagon road, being used perhaps a dozen times a year. There was much evidence to show that the portage had been in continuous use for many years. This was evidenced in part by the fact that there were no tree stumps in the path. Except in the places where horses had traveled through muddy spots, the path was well beaten and firm (Ibid.).

Three or four settlers had hacked out small clearings in the brush along the route. The first clearing, about two miles from Grand Portage, was that of C. C. Walker. Two miles farther, they crossed Highway No. 1 which went to Fort William, Ontario. A second clearing was about one-half mile inland from this highway. It may have belonged to a person named A. E. Sawyer. Three miles further in from the highway was the homestead clearing of A. O.

McGrath. In each instance, from one to three acres had been cleared and a cabin or shack erected (Ibid).

For the first two miles of its course, the portage rose gently, passing through a growth of young birch and poplar trees which ranged from three to eight inches in diameter. No really old trees were visible in this area, and Paul Le Garde, the local guide, mentioned the forest fires near the settlement in past years. Also, there was a distinct possibility that the region had been logged off many years before. At about two miles inland, the pine trees appeared and at a point about five miles along the portage, they predominated. About half way along the portage, a huge pine was found along it. From then on to the Pigeon River, more and more mature trees were seen, some of them perhaps a hundred years old. There were four places along the trail where detours had recently been made to avoid large trees which had fallen across the portage. Shirk wondered if the original course of the trail had shifted because of tree falls or other causes (Ibid.).

At this date the route was used by three or four homesteaders on the Grand Portage Indian Reservation, by Indians who were travelling to the Pigeon River, and by a few hunters or trappers in the winter. Two canoes were found near the end of the portage indicating that several local Indians still used a spot above the rapids in the river for launching them (Ibid.).

Fortunately, the Minnesota Geological Survey made a detailed map of the Grand Portage locality during the summer of 1927. George M. Schwartz, a geologist on the project prepared a brief paper on the topography and geology of the portage. He commented:

Advantage was taken of this opportunity to study the location of the portage relative to the geologic and topographic features of the region. As a result of this work the accompanying topographic and geologic map was prepared, which brings out various points more clearly than can words alone."

.....  
 About one mile up the portage from the bay is a gap where an old valley cuts across two large dikes. The map shows the close relation of the dikes and ridges. The stream which now flows through this gap is very small. About a mile farther on, the trail passes around the nose of a high dike ridge and over a slight crest, then dips across a valley. This is practically the only place on the trail where elevation once gained is lost, but it was impossible to avoid this valley and a loss of elevation of a hundred feet. Beyond the stream the trail follows the gentle rise to the west for three miles (George M. Schwartz, 1928, Minnesota History 9:26-30).

About midway between Lake Superior and the Pigeon River the trail passes through a narrow gap. It is noteworthy that this is the only break in a ridge which extends far on each side of the trail. One must admire the manner in which advantage was taken of every favorable place in the topography. Beyond the gap the trail turns nearly due

west and for the most part follows the dip slope of diabase sills, thus securing a comparatively level route and avoiding the extensive swamps of this westerly area. The broad curve of the trail to the north about two miles from the river was made to avoid a large swamp. By following the sill a gradual descent to the river was obtained (Ibid., pp. 29-30).

The Grand Portage was largely unused during World War II from 1941-1945 with the young men from the reservation in military service. Inevitably, the portage became overgrown with brush and young trees. In August, 1946 twenty-six Boy Scouts of North Star Council 286 and their leaders worked with the Indian Forest Service to clear three and one-half miles of the portage. This work continued in 1947 with thirty American and Canadian scouts and was scheduled for completion in 1948. The project was financed by Duluth business men and a movie made of the undertaking. (Minnesota Historical Society, News For Members, November, 1946 p. 2 and 1947, p. 2).

It appears probable that the present day alignment of the portage is quite close to that of the 1790's. The maps dating from the detailed surveys in the 1820's were made by highly competent men who had lifetimes of practical experience. David Thompson especially, was greatly skilled at this type of work and painstaking in his methods. A visual inspection of these maps shows a close resemblance to each other, particularly with the course of the portage. The most accurate reasonably modern map of the portage was made c. 1927 by skilled geologists and surveyors on the staff of the Minnesota Geological Survey (Map 16). This map shows the various geological features of the locality and the course of the portage in relation to them. In my opinion, it can be used as a standard of comparison for both older and modern maps of the portage.

Another argument in favor of the present day alignment of the portage can be taken from the detailed survey of the portage in 1927 by the Minnesota Geological Survey, and the comments of George M. Schwartz. He wrote: "One must admire the manner in which advantage was taken of every favorable place in the topography." Here, he referred to the skill with which the portage related to the topography and that its users had carefully placed it to utilize the natural features such as the ends of stone outcrops (Schwartz, 1928, p. 29).

#### Recommendations on the Survey of the Grand Portage

Repeated, directed field surveys with specific goals are recommended for the Grand Portage before any archeological investigations are made on it. An obvious project is to have the route of the present day portage compared with that in 1927 as depicted on the Schwartz map. Notes and photographs should be made as permanent records of this inspection. A search should be made for the many geological landmarks depicted on this map and their relationship to the portage investigated.

A detailed light table comparison should be made of identical scale maps of the portage dating from the 1822-23 surveys and the Schwartz map. Copies of

the survey notes of David Thompson should also be taken into the field with steel tape measures and a large surveyor's compass mounted on a tripod and used to duplicate the Thompson survey. Care should be taken to compensate for probable differences in magnetic declinations extant in the area in 1822 and the present day. Lastly, this comparative work would be of a better quality if made by an experienced surveyor skilled in plane table surveying.

## Chapter 5

### Chapter 5: Temporal & Seasonal Changes in Portage Routes or Alignments

Several records of passing over the Grand Portage mention the need to walk around large fallen trees. Over a period of years, such obstacles could cause shifts in the portage locations. Another major obstacle would be caused by heavy rains or the sudden melting of winter snows. In the summer of 1978, the north shore of Lake Superior had two unprecedented 7 inch rains. This caused severe flooding in Grand Portage Creek and along the portage.

Another series of problems could arise from beaver dams at stream crossings along the portage. Beaver felling of large trees could also create local flooding or obstacles across the portage. We must recognize of course that this problem would not have lasted long in the 18th century. Many travelers complained about the wet mud and clay on some sections of the portage. No doubt they went off the route and sought dryer footing when feasible. In some instances, brush may have been cut and laid down to improve the footing. Some portages also had corduroy roads made of logs laid on the ground in boggy areas. George M. Schwartz noted that the portage was laid out to avoid a swamp. It is probable that this route shifted on a seasonal basis depending on moisture conditions (Schwartz, 1928, pp. 29-30).

The Grand Portage had at least five stream crossings with one or two of them being moderately large. It is highly probable that these locations had simple log bridges laid across them, and that they were kept in repair by forced labor from the North West Company Montreal men.

Generally, rains are heavier in the spring time for the Grand Portage region. This would also be a critical time for the melting of heavy snow packs along the portage and associated flooding. There is little mention of portage use in winters aside from some late 18th century transport of supplies by sleighs. Heavy snows and storms could have created drifts and obstacles on the portage.

In July, 1922, Cecil W. Shirk, field secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society, went over the portage and made excellent notes on the vegetation as well as four large fallen trees. Detours had formed around them. Shirk commented that such detours could become permanent, but also speculated that there was about an equal chance that they would be eliminated in time. Here, he may have thought that users of the portage would attempt to shorten the route by cutting across a short detour when a fallen tree had been burned by a forest fire or had rotted away. Fallen trees are rarely mentioned in written records from 1731 to 1922. La Verendrye improved portages systematically to reduce travel time and costs. This maintenance continued until the North West Company abandoned the Grand Portage c. 1802. In 1806 the route was deliberately blocked with fallen trees to eliminate competitive use of it. These trees may have remained until they rotted or

were destroyed by forest fires. Scanty use of the portage into the 20th century gave plenty of time for trees to mature along the portage, to die, and to fall across it. Fallen trees would have burned in the forest fires north of Grand Portage village in unknown forest fires and those of 1873, 1878, and 1908 (Shirk MS.).

## Chapter 6

### Chapter 6: Trade Goods, Provisions and Supplies Carried over the Portage

European manufactured goods had an enormous impact on the American Indians who had lived for countless generations on the land by hunting, fishing, gathering wild plant foods and gardening. Their tools and weapons were made from wood, bone and stone. They did not have access to large amounts of plant or animal fibers and weaving techniques. European manufactured products of metal or fabric were initially miraculous to them, and greatly desired. Often too, they thought the Europeans fools for trading these valuable materials for commonplace worthless furs.

A study of Indians as consumers of manufactured trade goods in the eighteenth century reveals that Indians wanted fair prices, good quality merchandise, items that were stylistically pleasing, lightweight and durable for use under harsh conditions. Where possible, traders tried to obtain goods already familiar to their customers in type, style or pattern. Problems arose with metal items because they could not be repaired by the Indians or replaced as they lived long distances from the trading posts. English cloth had long been noted for its quality, and sold well to Indians, but some of it failed to satisfy them (Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference, 1980).

Harold A. Innis also made many observations on the types of European goods imported to North America for trade with the American Indians:

European goods were in greater demand among the Indians as old cultural traits disappeared. The beaver disappeared as a result of persistent trapping to meet this demand.

Innis relies heavily upon Peter Kalm's observations concerning the importation of European goods for the Indian trade (Innis, 1956, p.109).

The Europeans have taught the Indians in their neighborhood the use of firearms, and they have laid aside their bows and arrows, which were formerly their only arms, and make use of muskets. If the Europeans should now refuse to supply the Indians with muskets, they would be starved to death; as almost all their food consists of the flesh of animals, which they hunt; or they would be irritated to such a degree as to attack the Europeans. The Indians have hitherto never tried to make muskets or similar fire-arms; and their great indolence does not even allow them to mend those muskets which they have got. They leave this entirely to the Europeans . . . (Peter Kalm, 1772, Travels Into North America, vol. 2, p. 391).

Hatchets, knives, scissors, needles, and a steel to strike fire with. These instruments are now common among the Indians. They all take



these instruments from the Europeans and reckon the hatchets and knives much better than those which they formerly made of stones and bones. The stone hatchets of the ancient Indians are very rare in Canada (Ibid.).

Kettles of copper or brass, sometimes tinned in the inside. In these the Indians now boil all their meat, and they have a very great run with them. They formerly made use of earthen or wooden pots, and threw in red hot stones to make it boil. They do not want iron boilers because they cannot be easily carried on their continual journies, and would not bear such falls and knocks as their kettles are subject to (Ibid.).

Trade goods especially sought by the Indians were those which were used for hunting, fishing, or trapping. Weapons were also much desired as they were a great advantage in their frequent conflicts with other tribes.

Supplies for the trade which had been carefully chosen included knives, awls, hatchets, guns, gunpowder, powderhorns, shot, kettles, tobacco, and cloth. "The principal things necessary for the support of an Indian and his family, and which they usually trade for, are the following: a gun, a hatchet, an ice chisel, Brazil tobacco, knives, files, flints, powder and shot, a powder horn, a bayonet, a kettle, cloth, beads and the like" (Innis, 1956, p. 129).

Trade goods were packed with great care in England, valuable items were distributed throughout each piece, and the goods assembled in convenient sized packages. Pieces were expected to withstand water in case of accidents. Gunpowder was carried in wooden kegs which could dry out, split from being dropped or be otherwise damaged. Powder also had to be kept dry but away from careless smokers who might ignite it. Bolts of cloth and blankets were wrapped in canvas covers, but there are frequent mentions of these packages becoming wet and of the necessity to halt and dry them out (Innis, 1956, p. 209).

As time went on, woven textiles were gradually introduced and came to be major articles traded to the Indians. Woolen cloth in particular, was much desired because it was warm even when wet and dried well, not becoming stiff and brittle as did tanned animal skins. Woolen blankets were highly popular for their appearance and warmth. European clothing such as shirts and leggings developed into valuable trade goods. This is shown by the listing of late 18th century trade goods imported into Canada, and the large quantities of textiles (Innis, 1956, pp. 209 & 236).

Imported trade goods, supplies, and foodstuffs funneled through Grand Portage to the northwest in steadily increasing quantities. The increases are shown by a steady growth in the North West Company's traffic over the portage. In the 1780's, ten days of portaging were normal, by the mid 1790's, fifteen days were needed to carry the company's trade goods to Fort Charlotte. There was a comparable increase in the volume of baled furs taken down the portage to the depot on Grand Portage Bay (Ibid., pp. 166-

167 & 226-7).

Gradually, the assortments of trade goods became standardized and were procured by agents from large wholesalers in England.

Principal articles exported from Great Britain, for the Indian trade by the North West Company are:  
 Blankets, manufactured at Witney, Oxfordshire.  
 Woollens, ditto in Yorkshire namely: Strouds, Coatings, Moltons, serges, and Flannel, common Blue and Scarlet cloths.  
 Cotton manufactures, from Manchester: Striped Cottons, Dimities, Janes, Fustians, Printed British Cottons, Shawls and Handkerchiefs, Gartering and Ferretting.  
 Hardware in large quantities.  
 Irish linens, Scotch sheetings, Osnaburgs and Linens, Nets, Twine, Birdlime, Threads, Worsted yard, large quantities.  
 Brass, Copper and Tin kettles.  
 Indian fusils, Pistols, Powder, Ball, Shot and Flints.  
 Painters' colors, Vermillion, etc.  
 Stationery, Beads, Drugs and Large parcels of all kinds of Birmingham manufacture, with other articles of British manufacture (Innis, 1956, pp. 166-167).

Joseph Hadfield, a British traveler, came to North America soon after the close of the Revolutionary War and fortunately recorded his observations on conditions in Canada and the newly formed United States. He had exceptional opportunities to observe the loading of canoes for the great lakes fur trade (An Englishman in America, 1785, 1933, p. 103):

25th July, 1785

This day I was favored with the particulars of the articles necessary for the loading of a canoe:

	EACH	TOTAL
16 bales containing each 1 pr. Shoud (?) and other dry goods.....	100	1,600 lbs.
12 kegs of Rum, ea. 8 galls.....	80	960
2 kegs of Wine, ea. 8 galls.....	80	160
4 kegs of Pork and Beef.....	70	280
2 kegs of Grease, viz., 1/3 Tallow and 2/3 Hog's Lard.....	70	140
1 keg of Butter.....		70
3 cases of Iron Work.....	100	300
1 case of Guns.....		90
6 kegs of Powder.....	80	480
4 bags of Shot and Ball.....	85	340
4 bags of Flour.....	100	400
4 rolls of Brazil Tobacco.....	90	360
4 bales of (?) Tobacco.....	90	360

63 packages.....		5,540 lbs.
64 packages of different articles.....		5,540 lbs.
9 men.....	140	1,260
9 bags of --- --- --- ---.....	30	270
1 keg of rum.....	80	80
6 bags of Bread or Pease.....	100	600
4 kegs of Beef or Pork.....	70	280
1 Travelling Case.....	80	80
Kettles, Poles, Paddles, Oil Cloth, Gum, Bark, etc., suppose---...		140
		-----
(Hadfield, 1933, p. 103).		8,250 lbs.

A fascinating document has survived from the North West Company's correspondence for 1794. Titled "Scheme for the NW Outfit," it describes in detail the planning that went into working out the quantity and kinds of goods needed for Grand Portage, and the number of men and canoes required to haul the goods up and bring the furs down. That year the Company sent 2,015 pieces from Montreal:

- 600 bales, dry goods
- 40 trunks, dry goods
- 30 bales, Brazil tobacco
- 10 bales, Spencer tobacco
- 20 bales, Carrot tobacco (name derived from shape)
- 22 cases, guns
- 90 cases, iron
- 8 cases, hats
- 20 cases, knives
- 3 cases, soap
- 70 "Maccaroons"
- 2 bales, traps
- 10 bales, copper kettles
- 10 bales, tin kettles
- 20 bales, (Hams? & Cheecks?)
- 10 kegs, sugar
- 8 kegs, salt
- 32 kegs, butter
- 100 kegs, powder
- 80 kegs, pork
- 230 kegs, grease
- 40 kegs, beef
- 400 kegs, high wines
- 50 kegs, rum
- 10 kegs, port wine
- 10 kegs, brandy
- 20 kegs, shrub
- 3 kegs, sausages
- 30 bags, ball
- 20 bags, shot
- 17 bags green peas

## --- 2015 Pieces"

(Erwin Thompson, Grand Portage: The Great Carrying Place, 1969, p. 74).

It is simple to calculate that a labor force of c. 126 voyageurs would be needed to transport these materials over the Grand Portage so long as each one carried two pieces and made the regulation 8 trips.

A far smaller number of men was needed to load north canoes bound for the Red River at the close of the 18th century.

## Journal for the Year 1797

Friday 4th August - Received the loadings of Four Canoes for River Painbinat & Thirteen Pieces for the Bottom of the River Ouinipique - Dist under the mark Q

17 Bales Dryd Goods - EO  
 1 Trunk Sendried - 1 Case Guns:  
 4 Cases Iron Works - 8 Kegs H. Wines -  
 6 Kegs Powder - 4 Rolls Spenser Twist Tobo  
 5 Bags Balls - --  
 6 Bags Shott - 13 Ps R. Ouinipique  
 4 Bales Carrot Tobacco  
 5 Rolls Spencers Twist Tobo  
 1 Bale Copper Kettles -  
 1 Bale Tin - Ditto  
 1 Bale Beaver Traps -  
 30 Kegs H Wines  
 1 Maccaron Rum  
 2 Cases Guns N.W.

--

84 Trading Pieces -  
 2 Bags flour -  
 2 Kegs Sugar -  
 1 Keg Beef -  
 1 Keg Port -  
 1 Keg Shrub -

-----  
91 Pieces"

(Harold Hickerson, "Journal of Charles Chabolliez, 1797," Ethnohistory, Vol. 6, 1959, pp. 272-273).

Tobacco soon became a highly valued commodity and a necessity to Indian trappers and hunters as it eased the rigors of their harsh lives and was somewhat addictive. Much has also been written concerning the importation of increasing quantities of distilled liquors for the Indian trade. Many bands or tribes became addicted to alcoholic beverages and were driven to hunting and trapping to obtain it. Typically, fur traders imported increasingly large quantities of liquors during periods of great competition between rival concerns. It became a major commodity transported across the Grand Portage. There was a considerable loss in transporting it because the wooden kegs could dry out or become damaged through rough

handling or accidents. Many voyageurs relished liquor so it was necessary to keep a close watch on them while it was being transported.

Journal from the Grand Portage, Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg  
in 1800

5 Bales Merchandize---90 pounds each  
1 Bale Carrot Tobacco  
1 Bale Kettles  
1 Case Guns  
1 Case Iron works  
2 Rolls New Twist Tobacco  
2 Bags Leaden Balls  
1 Bag Leaden shot  
1 Bag flour  
1 Keg sugar  
2 Kegs Gunpowder  
10 Kegs of High Wines 9 Gallons each.

--

18 pieces Total  
Equipage for the Voyage.  
Provisions for 4 men to Red River.  
4 Bags Corn, 1-1/2 bushels in Each.  
1/2 Keg Grease."

(Barry M. Gough, The Journal of Alexander Henry The Younger,  
Vol. 1, 1988, pp. 5-6).

Great quantities of provisions consisting largely of dry lyed corn and grease were imported into the northwest as food for the voyageurs. Normally, these commodities were one-third of the cargo of outward bound canoes at Fort Charlotte. Often, they were consumed in a few weeks and additional food supplies had to be found among the Indian populations along the Rainy River.

Many partners of the North West Company had experienced hunger and starvation in the remote wilderness and felt more secure if a large food stock was at hand. Usually, the North West Company tried to keep a year's supply of foodstuffs at Fort Charlotte for distribution to canoe brigades bound for the northwest. Dry biscuits, corn meal, and many other foods were carried in cloth bags and could be easily damaged by contact with wet vegetation or water while being portaged. It is probable that most portaging was halted during rains. (Lamb, ed., 1970, p. 97).

## Chapter 7

**Chapter 7: Physical or Locational Features of the Portage**

The Grand Portage lies in the Canadian Biotic Province which has the uneven topography of a heavily glaciated country. Gravel moraines, and ridges, sandy outwash plains, swamps and rock outcrops abound. The soils are the products of cool, moist forests and are light colored, acid and infertile, being low in organic content. The characteristic climax of most forests in this region is a coniferous forest. In some localities, there were large stands of sugar maple, but yellow birch, beech, aspen, and white pine were also associated. Wet, swampy ground had black spruce, tamarack, cedar, fir, white pine, alder and white birch (Cleland, 1966, p. 9).

The most prominent features of the landscape are the dikes or diabase ridges, slate valleys with slight soil deposits, and small streams that run through some of these valleys. Many of these features are shown on a detailed map of the Grand Portage prepared by the Minnesota Geological Survey in the late 1920's (Map 16).

It is possible that the Grand Portage originated as a game trail perhaps made by herds of migrating caribou. Newton H. Winchell noted such trails in the area running between the Grand Portage and Trout Lake in the late 1870's (Winchell, Tenth Annual Report, Minnesota Geological and Natural History Survey, 1881, p. 27).

A casual but highly relevant observation was made by young John Macdonell, an apprentice clerk for the North West Company, who served at the fur trade depot in the summer of 1793. He walked over the portage then and recorded one of the better known observations on the the Grand Portage in these words:

The Portage is three leagues from one navigation to the other which caused great expense and trouble to the company. The men have Six Livres of this currency for every peice of Goods or pack of Furs they carry from one end of it to the other--"

.....  
The Portage is full of hills is divided by the voyageurs into sixteen Poses or resting places, its soil is chiefly composed of copper coloured clay the chief vegetable production of which is spruce, fir, and other evergreens (Macdonell in Gates, 1965, pp. 93 & 96-97).

Alexander Mackenzie commented at length concerning the Grand Portage and wrote with long years of experience concerning it. His data related to the 1790's. Speaking of the Montreal men or pork eaters, he wrote:

When they are arrived at the Grande Portage which is nearly

nine miles over, each of them had to carry eight packages of such goods and provisions as are necessary for the interior country.

.....  
 Having finished this toilsome part of their duty, if more goods are necessary to be transported, they are allowed a Spanish dollar for each package; and inured are they to this kind of labor, that I have known some of them set off with two packages of ninety pounds each, and return with two others of the same weight, in the course of six hours, being a distance of eighteen miles over hills and mountains (Lamb ed., 1970, p. 97).

Alexander Henry the Younger went over the portage on July 19, 1800 and commented sourly about his two hour walk:

The road through the Portage was very bad in some places, knee deep in mud and clay, and so slippery, as to make walking tedious (Barry M. Gough, editor, The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814, vol. 1, p.97, 1988).

David Thompson's Records of the Grand Portage "Trail", 1797-1824

David Thompson, the famed British geographer and cartographer, went over the Grand Portage many times between 1797 and 1824. The standard biography of his productive life and career was written by Joseph B. Tyrell, a noted Canadian geographer and historian. It has been replaced by a new edition (Joseph B. Tyrell ed., David Thompson's Narrative, 1916 & Richard Glover, ed., David Thompson's Narrative, 1962) He measured the portage three or four times and usually kept detailed notes on the weather, condition of the portage, vegetation, and progress of the portaging. His journals are difficult to use, but meticulous notes have been made from them by Thomas D. Thiessen, Archeologist, Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska. His notes are indispensable for the study of Thompson's records. Microfilms of the Thompson journal entries have been carefully collated with Thiessen's notes. His generous contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

On June 11, 1798 David Thompson measured the height of the high hill behind the North West Company depot. His notes follow:

In the Afternoon -- Measured the height of the Hill behind the Fort -- took Altde [altitude] of the Hill at the edge of the Lake 4 ft above its level-- Altde double-- 43-45 1/2-- but the Ground not permitting another Altde I measured a Base along the Lake-- calling the top of the Hill A-- the spot where the Altde was taken B-- C & the end of the measured base C-- Angles-- at B - [angle symbol] 95-41-- at C- [angle symbol] 60. 43'-- Base exact[ly] 63 fath[oms] Hence the height of the Hill above the place of Obsn [observation] 294.5 feet-- to which add 4 ft the height of the place of Obsn above the level of the Lake-- & it gives 298.5 feet for the Height of the Hill above the level of Lake Superior-- These notes are accompanied by two sketches

showing Thompson's methods of triangulation measurements (Thompson Journals, Ontario Public Archives, 1986 microfilm edition, Reel 1, Series 1, Bound Volume 5, Book 9, June 11, 1798).

A few days later he measured the portage:

June 16 th. [1798] Measured the Grand Portage-- from the West Gate of the Fort, Lake Superior. to the Brink of the Rivulet at Fort Charlotte-- 14,110 yards-- 1960 Yds to the Parting Trees-- 7140 yards to the Fountain-- 11400 yards to the Meadow-- & 8 Miles exact to the Door of the House of Fort Charlotte-- + 30 yards to the Stream-- (Thompson Journals, Reel 1, Bound Volume 5).

In July, 1822, Thompson began his survey work on the international boundary between the United States and British North America. Here, he traveled by canoe along the north shore of Lake Superior from Fort William to Grand Portage Bay:

July 22 [1822] a SW Wind arising we sailed to 9 1/2 Am when thank God we put ashore at the old Great Carryg Place to Observe for Ltde & Longde to examine the Road; and the Wind becoming too high soon after increased to a steady Gale; and dissipated the remaining Clouds. ... The Great Carryg Place is along the cut in the Hills of a Brook, which empties itself close to us, and is now nearly dry: This direction is at first NW-- then more to the westd. scarce a vestige remains of all the former Factories; they are covered with rank grass, in places a little fine red clover (Thompson Journals, Reel 4, Bound Volume 20, pp. 51 67 - 51 68).

[August 5, 1822] ... Early the men began carrying the Cargo and Canoe over this Carryg. Place-- took the Lde of the Pt of Land and direction of the Carryg Place;

[August 6, 1822] Tuesday-- . . . measured with a Tape Line of 100 ft the Carrying Place altho' the very first time in service and handled very carefully it broke twice;-- dined at the end The 3 Miles very hilly; at a Brook of 5 Yds wide measd: runs into the Pigeon River; which now lies 1 M distt abt North from us or NNE. The men have brought every Thing to this Brook. Ahed the the Course is N28W--. at 1 PM the Men set off each with a Load with a Load of my Baggage, Instruments &c for the NW end-- and at 6 1/4 PM arrived, very much fatigued. They returned, and we camped. The Road is excessively fatiquing; covered so thick with an undergrowth of Cedar(?) and Mountain herbage, Grass &c that the Path cannot be seen; and the old causeways that once crossed the swampy places, are entirely rotten, full of holes and dangerous. Many flyg Clouds all day. Westly Wind & a Gale at times. in the afternoon very cloudy: and at Night moderate Rain: This Carryg Place from Water to Water measures 43670 feet. 8 1/4 Stat Miles or 7 Geo Miles + 382 Yds [a note at the side of the page: To the Brook of 5 Yds 15240 ft. Co[ur]se N28W then West 28430 ft. 9449 [?] Yds. 28430 ft.] The Water in this River, is high for the Season (Thompson Journals, Reel 4, Bound Volume 21, pp. 52 5



& 52 6).

[August 7, 1822] ... Sent the Indian to examine by Land, the River below us-- and to proceed, and mark the Road as far as he could this day that the Assistant and Interpreter might follow this Route and report on the direction, state of the River, &c at 3 1/2 PM the Indian returned and reported that he followed the River about 3 Miles, over very bad hilly Ground, covered with Thickets & fallen wood-- here the Rocks became almost impracticable to climb; the River all the way a series of Rapids, now passed between high steep Craigs, so steep that he did not dare look down.-- ... Men busy carrying, and much fatigued (Thompson Journals, Reel 4, Bound Volume 21, p. 52 7).

[August 10, 1822] ... he saw the American Party on the Carryg Place, they were to camp at the Fountain-- 8 Rests-- leaving 10 Rests to carry. their Canoe at the Meadow (Ibid., p. 52 7).

[August 23, 1822] ... and went down to the Great Carrying Place at 10 1/2 Am-- soon after commenced carrying-- ... late in the evening, got all to the Fountain, except 2 loads.-- (Ibid., p. 52 21).

#### Great Carrying Place

[August 24, 1822] ... A Morning of heavy Dew, aided by heavy fog. which has loaded (the Herbage & Branches with Water, so that every thing in carrying is as wet as with heavy Rain.-- Came on with every thing to the Brook at 8 3/4 Am breakfasted-- then took a Load, each man to the Lake at 1 PM. camped-- The Men returned for the Canoe and rest of the Baggage.-- ... plenty of ripe Raspberries-- In the evening, every thing was brought over-- the Men very much fatigued (Thompson Journals, Reel 4, Bound Volume 21, p. 52 21).

.....  
[June 28, 1823] ... At 11:20 Am Thank God arrived at the Great Carry Place except our Things, The Men carried all the Cargo, & the Canoe 1 Mile on the C Place and then camped-- we on the side of the Lake-- (Thompson Journals, Bound Volume 22, p. 55 26).

[June 29, 1823] ... The Men carried every thing to the little Rill, westd of the Poplar Brook; at the last we camped; and our Things thus far behind (p. 55 27).

[June 30, 1823] ... At 9 Am the Men came for our Things, and carried them on to the west end. Banks of the Pigeon River. (My Son) the Assistant and myself ascended the C Place from Lake Superior to the River with a wire chain of 50 ft length. its whole length is 43,134 ft = 14,378 Yards = 8 S{tatute?} Miles and 298 Yards or 7 Geo[rge] Miles and 203 Yards-- Remarks. going on the east side of the Brook 220 yds cross a Rill-- at 1840 Yds. a

Rill. at 2510[?] yds a Rill; all three to the Brook, and always ascending-- The Poplar Brook is 4783 Yds.-- of abt. 3 Yds. width, and runs into the Pigeon River abt 1 M below the path.-- a steady constant ascent from the Lake hereto the Co.[urse] is N20W wav[er]ing[?] a few deg[rees] on each side--... The Men camped just 3 M S. and abt 100Yds farther a Rill to the Right.-- The Lake Brook continues with us for 2 1/4 M. then comes from the westd. measured on; The Fountain just 4 Miles to a few Yards, and the east of the Meadow just 6 Miles-- Thence 2 1/8 Miles to the Pigeon River. The Country ascends gradually, and at times very perceptible to the Fountain then a level for 1/2 M Then rises Constantly to near the Meadow, a little beyond which rises gradually to within 1 1/8 M of the River; from whence it gently lowers to the River, perhaps about 30 ft. The Course from Poplar Brook by often setting the Compass is first N70W 1/2 Mile the abt due West; ... The whole has a Bed of deep Soil, mostly a reddish stony[?] with clay; and well covered with vegetation of Trees and Herbs &c at 3/4 M from the Lake for 200 Yds the bare Rock shews itself, but only there. At 1 1/4 PM the Men returned to carry the Cargo &c They camped at a short diste beyond the Meadow (Thompson Journals, Bound Volume 22, p. 55 28.)

[August 20, 1823]; ... At 8 Am moderated-- at 9:15 carried over the CP & set off. at 9:40 at the Great C.P. Thank God. ... spread all our things to dry. At 11 1/2 Am the Men set off with a Load, and went to the Meadow 2 Miles dined, a few smart Showers They have just 2 Loads per Man, counting the Canoe and with a weak man La Grave & Fruceman [?]. we camped-- every thing brought here, and the Canoe carried abt 1 M farther (Ibid., p. 55 72).

[August 21, 1823]; At 5 Am the Men set off with a Load to the Poplar Brook where we breakfasted; then came to the SE end of the CP on Lake Superior Thank God. At 1 PM the Men returned for the Canoe and are camped. The Canoes are at the Fountain; they brought them near a Mile this side the Poplar Brook and slept there (Ibid., p. 55 72).

David Thompson returned to Grand Portage on June 18, 1824 from Fort William and began to ascend the portage once more. The detailed compass bearings, etc. are omitted.

[June 18, 1824]; . . . tied every thing in Loads fit for the Carrying Place, and after Breakfast set off, at 7:10 AM landed and began carrying. This Carrying Place is 8 1/4 Statute Miles in length, about 5 M of which is almost constantly ascending. . . . we camped many Musketoos, which harass the men very much (Thompson Journals, Reel 5, Bound Volume 24, p. 58 1).

[June 19, 1824]; . . . At 8:25 Am began carrying. altho the willows, Boughs of Trees &c shower down on us. dined at the Brook At 7 PM camped at the Fountain, left half Cargo one Pose behind The Men very tired with the slippery bad Road, wet heavy Baggage &c and the Road is much encumbered, and some places shut up with young Trees, Willows &c crushed down by the

Winter Snow, worked hard clearing them with the Axe (Ibid., p. 58 2).

[June 20, 1824]; ... Early began carrying and continued At 5 PM came to the Meadow Campment. ... The Road much encumbered, but better than yesterday. Many flies (Ibid.).

[June 21, 1824]; ... began carrying-- One pose short of the little Rill of Water at 10 1/2 Am, heavy Rain came on and we camped, part of the men stayed with the baggage behind, and part with me. All day bad Weather and many Flies. Men could not rest (Ibid.).

[June 22, 1824]; ... We have 3 Poses to carry over to the Pigeon River, -- end of this Carrying Place. got all over by 10:50 Am Thank God (Ibid., p. 58 2).

Most measurements and observations of the Grand Portage commence at its south east end at Lake Superior and proceed up the portage to its upper or northwest end at Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River. In early September, 1824 David Thompson went down the portage from the Pigeon River to Lake Superior and kept detailed records as usual:

[September 3, 1824]; . . . at the NW end of the Great C Place Thank God. here we breakfasted. put all in order for carrying, made fires under the Canoes to dry them. Each of the Men set off with a Load to the Meadow & got there at 9 1/2 Am. Meadow heavy Rain came on, & all wet we camped-- The Rain continued all day, part of the Men at the other end making Fires to dry & lighten the Canoes (Thompson Journals, Bound Volume 26, p. 60 44).

[September 4, 1824]; . . . At 8 3/4 Am the Men brought the Canoes to the Meadow-- . . . at 1 1/4 PM set off, at 5 1/4 PM they brought the Canoes, & 1 rest farther, & part of the cargo 2 rests do. Camped at the Brook, (Ibid., p. 60 45).

[September 5, 1824]; . . . at 6 1/2 Am set off with the rest of the Cargo. . . . sight the Lake. . . . to the Shores of lake Superior-- Thank God (Ibid.).

End notes in the rear of this journal contain place names and measurements on up the Grand Portage from Lake Superior:

Grand C Place 220 yds across Rill 1840 do 2510 do 4783 Poplar Brook 7030 yds the Fountain 10560 the Meadow 14376 yds Pigeon River (Thompson Journals, Reel 5, Bound Volume 29, p. 63 89).

Comments made by Major Joseph Delafield in 1822 provide a few more specifics, which by inference locate a pose or two. His first location was the "Second River" which was situated after the "First River" as one ascended the eight and one-quarter mile long portage. A small grassy clearing was at this location. Delafield believed this had been a pose. Some of his voyageurs camped at "The Spring" which came after the "Second

River." The "Third River" was about midway on the route. He also noted that the small streams had been bridged during the North West Company era, but that these useful features had long since rotted away and had not been renewed (McElroy & Riggs, 1943, pp.70, 404-406; & Winchell, 1899, p. 504).

The general course of the Grand Portage between the bay and the Pigeon River is depicted on many maps from about 1750 to modern times. Accurate and literal depictions of the route were mapped by both the United States and the British parties which were attempting to map and define the international boundary during the early 1820's. Maps made by George W. Whistler (Map 6) and Samuel Thompson (Map 7) both show the route in much detail. Each cartographer gave particular attention to the several small streams which were crossed by the portage, and to the hills and valleys which were prominent features of the terrain.

An accurate, but more generalized map of the route was prepared in 1858 by Charles L. Emerson in the course of his survey of the Pigeon River Indian Reservation (Map 9). The U.S. Government Land Office surveys of the region ca. 1893 provide a detailed view of the country over which the portage passes. A geological map of the portage (Map 15) with notes, was made by George M. Schwartz of the Minnesota Geological Survey in 1927 and published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1928 (Schwartz, 1928, opp. p. 26).

An elaborate, five sheet series of maps of the lower portion of the monument was begun in 1962 by Kip Lantz, a civil engineer from the Philadelphia Regional Office of the National Park Service in 1962. In 1962, Lantz planned to map the portage during the winter months. The project was completed by Leslie Fugetti, another engineer, in 1963-64. Amazingly, there is no mention of this work in the 1982 administrative history of the monument (Observations by Alan R. Woolworth at Grand Portage National Monument, 1962-1964 & Ron Cockrell, 1983. Grand Portage National Monument, Minnesota: An Administrative History. Omaha, National Park Service. Revised. 1982).

#### The Eastern End of the Grand Portage

Over the years, there has been much confusion concerning the commencement of the Grand Portage. There can be no final, definite decision on this matter because there were at least three, perhaps more, locations from which segments of the portage originated near Lake Superior.

In prehistoric times it appears to have begun at an Indian canoe landing or camp on the eastern portion of the bay and then went north along Grand Portage Creek. At Jonathan Carver's 1767 visit to Grand Portage, the commonly used location appears to have been well east of Grand Portage Creek, perhaps as much as one and one-half miles east of this stream. From this point it may have gone northwest to a point east of the creek and just below the hill on which the Roman Catholic church stands. It could have also merged with the major branch of the portage north of Grand Portage village. Then, it also followed the creek northward to a cleft in the hills.

When the North West Company was well entrenched in its depot, there were apparently three separate points from which the portage began. These were:

1). The west gate of the North West Company depot; 2). The "public road" which ran from the beach east of Grand Portage Creek and northeast of the hill on which the church is located; and 3). The XY Company and other opposition firms all operated from sites a considerable distance eastwards from the creek. Their voyageurs would have walked northwest across a level tract of land to the foot of a hill east of the creek and then northwards along the eastern margin of the creek towards a waterworn cleft in the hills.

Notes on the beginning of the British fur trader's Grand Portage a short distance east of the mouth of Grand Portage Creek are on the first page of Chapter 4.

Jonathan Carver recorded a considerable amount of detail during his visit at Grand Portage in the summer of 1767. His description of Grand Portage Bay shows that the Ojibwe Indian village and the fur trader's camps were about one and one-half miles east of Mount Rose. It appears logical to assume that the Grand Portage commenced near this location and that it may have done so since prehistoric times. The Grand Portage Ojibwe Indians made it a practise to seek shelter from the winter winds by camping near to Mount Josephine. Fur traders appear to have camped in the same general area (Map 3); (John Parker, ed., The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents, 1766-1770, 1976, pp. 130-131, & 172).

Grace Lee Nute's study, "A British Legal Case and Old Grand Portage," deals with a fur trade controversy at Grand Portage between the dominant North West Company and an independent trader in 1802 (Minnesota History, vol. 21, 1940, pp. 117-148). Dr. Nute's study provides much information on the clearing of forest cover near the mouth of Grand Portage Creek; when several forts were erected; who built them; and information on local land use. It is discussed hereafter:

#### Testimony of Thomas Forsyth

. . . That Deponent has been informed that that space of ground has been cleared these fifty years past, and that it has been occupied by the tents of the North West Company, (Nute, 1940, p. 133).

#### Testimony of Maurice Blondeau

Maurice Blondeau, Esquire, deposes and says that he has been a merchant voyageur in this country since 1752. That he went up to Grand Portage the first time in 1766. That he knows the fort where the bourgeoisie were, [North West Company] which was not then cleared and was not cleared for two or three years thereafter and then by a man named Erskine, as he believes. That according to what has been told him, the Big Company [NWCO] occupies at present the same fort that the deponent occupied formerly (Ibid., p. 134).

#### Testimony of Daniel Sutherland

Daniel Sutherland Deposeth and saith That he has been in the

habit of trading to the upper Country for these fourteen years past. . . . That he particularly knows the old fort at the Grand Portage which was occupied by the said North West Company in the year 1801, and that as the Deponent has been informed was occupied by them last year. That he also knows the situation of a smaller fort at a little distance from the former which now goes by the name of Fort Boucher, and that the space of ground between them was cleared (defriche) when the Deponent first saw it, and appeared to have been so for several years before that time, . . . (Ibid., 1940, pp. 137-139).

.....

That during the time the Deponent was at the Grand Portage the above mentioned space between the two forts was always occupied by the tents and the men and by their Canots. That the said space of ground is bounded in front by the lake, on the south West side by the old fort, on the North East by Fort Boucher (belonging to the North West Company as he believes) and in the rear by the woods (Ibid., p. 138).

.....

. . . Says further that there is a public Road that passes in the open space between the two forts above mentioned to the North side of the Portage, and that a Cart may pass in the said road from the Beach to the little River, which Road was made, before Deponent went to the Grand Portage, by the former North West Company as Deponent believes (Ibid., p. 139).

This information suggests that the location of the South East end of the Grand Portage was shifted southwest about one and one-half miles c. 1768-1769 and that a number of new trading establishments were built adjacent to this new location soon afterwards. By 1778 the stockaded establishments of four or five traders had been erected in this area. During the summer of 1778, Lieutenant Thomas Bennett and his detachment worked at laying out and building a "public road" from the South East end of the new portage location to the northward for an unspecified distance. By 1785-1787, these new establishments were absorbed by the enlarged North West Company depot (Woolworth, 1975, p. 206 & E.E. Rich, Montreal and the Fur Trade, 1966, pp. 71-72).

It is also relevant to note that a number of independent traders in the 1780's and 1790's built trading facilities a considerable distance east of the Grand Portage Creek mouth. Perhaps they continued to use the older, original end of the portage which was about one and one-half miles to the eastward of the newer one.

This information conclusively places the commencement of the Grand Portage in this location during the period c. 1778-1802. This was also the same location surveyed by British and American astronomers in 1822-23. Prominent among them was David Thompson, surveyor and geographer, who knew it well from first hand observations.

A wide variety of maps drawn by Jonathan Carver, ca. 1767; George W. Whistler, 1822; Samuel Thompson, 1822; Charles L. Emerson, 1858; U.S. Topographical Engineers, 1861; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1881; Minnesota Highway Department, 1925; Solon J. Buck, 1923 & 1931; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1940; all depict at least one branch of the Grand Portage originating on the lakeshore east of Grand Portage Creek, and then pursuing a course northwards at a moderate distance east of the creek. This alignment can be traced in some detail on a topographic map that depicts the Grand Portage in 1823. Copies of all of these maps are in this report.

#### The Western End of the Portage

It is almost certain that La Verendrye had an establishment on the "Riviere Nanatougan" or Pigeon River at the western end of the Grand Portage. A notarized deed dated August 9, 1733 makes it clear that he had canoes and other belongings at this location which were being guarded. At this date, La Verendrye and his associates had more engages at Fort Michilimackinac and the Pigeon River than their competitors. Most probably, La Verendrye had a range of log buildings at this site to provide quarters for management, employees, and the storage of trade goods and furs. It is likely also that there was some type of a shed to house the fragile birch bark canoes from the weather and animals (Gerin Lajoie MS., Minnesota Historical Society, Manuscript Collections).

Additional circumstantial evidence is available to support this viewpoint. A copy of a map dated 1737 and attributed to Count Beauharnois depicts the Grand Portage as being at the head of a bay on Lake Superior. This may well be an indication of the La Verendrye use of the Grand Portage. Reuben Gold Thwaites noted in the Wisconsin Historical Collections, (Vol. 11, 1888, p. 124) that he had examined a French map of 1737 which showed a structure at the upper end of the Grand Portage. He claimed it was called Fort St. Pierre. There are no other known uses of this place name (Burpee, 1927, opp. p. 116).

#### Fort Charlotte

Explorations at the site of Fort Charlotte in 1922 by E. Dewey Albinson and Alvin C. Eastman located what may be the site of such a structure on the north side of Snow Creek (Albinson Ms., 1922, Minnesota Historical Society Archives). Underwater archaeological work at the Pigeon River in 1973 by Douglas A. Birk indicates the retrieval of French artifacts from the period of 1730-1760 on the north side of Snow Creek and along the Pigeon River in front of the building mapped by Albinson in 1922 (Wheeler et al., 1975, p. 44 & Albinson Map, 1922).

Robert Nickel of the Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska, made a proton magnetometer survey of Fort Charlotte in 1978 and prepared a report on his work. In 1979 more detailed mapping was done at this site and further proton magnetometer investigations were made. Robert Huggins and John W. Weymouth wrote a report, "A Magnetic Survey of Fort Charlotte, Grand Portage National Monument," and Bruce A. Jones prepared a report, "Historic Sites Archeology at Fort Charlotte, Grand Portage National Monument, Minnesota," 1980.

Rapid changes took place at Grand Portage in the 1770's. In May, 1772 Laurent Ermatinger, a trader, suggested to a colleague that voyageurs who brought trade goods from Montreal could be used to carry them over the portage. This would allow traders to proceed into the interior more quickly. As early as 1773, the pork eaters or Montreal men were required to carry six packs of trade goods over the portage. By 1774 there is evidence that trade goods were now prepared in packs for the portage. Large shipments of merchandise were made to Grand Portage in 1775. Some historians view this as the beginning of the North West Company. In 1776 a number of traders cooperated to shift their supply base from Mackinac to Grand Portage (Innis, 1956, pp. 193-194 & 218; Thompson, 1969, pp. 24-25; and Edwin E. Rich, Montreal and the Fur Trade, 1966, pp. 71-72).

The importance of the Grand Portage as the gateway to the Northwest continued to grow during the 1770's. By 1778 there were at least four substantial palisaded fur trade facilities on the bay. Logic suggests that these firms had secure facilities at Fort Charlotte to house their north canoes, provisions, equipment, and trade goods once they had been transported across the Grand Portage to Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River. These structures appear to have been in use by 1785-1787 when the North West Company began to assume its final form under the guidance of the Frobisher brothers and Simon McTavish (Woolworth, 1975, p. 206 & Thompson, 1969, pp. 45-47).

It is probable that the astute Frobishers named this facility "Fort Charlotte" to honor the wife of King George III. Perhaps the name "Fort George" was applied to the company's establishment on Grand Portage Bay; if so, it had little use. Thus, the Grand Portage would have been the connecting link between two fur trade facilities named for the British monarch and his consort.

The little known Montreal Company owned by Peter Pangman, Alexander Mackenzie and the firm of Gregory, McLeod and Co., offered a considerable competition to the North West Company by 1785. At the upper end of the portage, they erected a storehouse warmly put together and large enough for their uses. Further, this facility stood opposite the "old fort" of the North West Company. The probabilities are great that it was to the left or west of the North West Company depot. It is evident that the NWCo must have had its depot there for some years if it would be called an "old fort." (Thompson, 1969, pp. 45-46 & Louis R. Masson, ed., Les Bourgeoise de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, vol. 1, 1889, pp. 22-23).

John Macdonald of Garth made a casual reference to Fort Charlotte "on the North end of Grand Portage," referring to his adventures in 1791. This would be further evidence that this name had been in common use for some years (Thompson, 1969, pp. 57-58).

For instance, consider the fact that young John Macdonnell noted in 1793 that: "Mr. Donald Ross has been so long in charge of Fort Charlotte that he has acquired the respectable name of Governor. Here, we ponder the real meaning of "so long in charge of Fort Charlotte." Did this mean 5 years, 7 years or 10 years? In any event, by 1793 Fort Charlotte was considered an old post (Macdonnell in Gates, 1965, p. 97).



The highly interesting narrative of John Tanner, a long time Indian captive, affords us a different type of viewpoint on Fort Charlotte as of the North West Company at this location:

"When we reached the small house at the other side of the Grand Portage to Lake Superior, the people belonging to the traders urged us to put our packs in the wagons and have them carried across. But the old woman knowing if they were once in the hands of the traders it would be difficult, if not impossible, for her to get them again, refused to comply with this request. It took us several days to carry all our packs across, as the old woman would not suffer them to be carried in the trader's road (James, 1956, p. 51).

John Macdonald of Garth came to Grand Portage as a new clerk in 1791. About 1798 he reminisced how he was sent up the portage to Fort Charlotte to discharge the clerk in charge of the establishment. A few days later, he was sent back to Fort Charlotte to force the opposition (probably the XY Company) to move a longer distance from this depot. Simon McTavish was, of course, eager to create problems for opponents, but appears to have been concerned here with preventing a close observation of the company's operations by its enemies:

Fort Charlotte was . . . on the North end of the Grand Portage a general Depot after crossing the Grand Portage 9 miles long--so called I supposed after Old Queen Charlotte; here we just landed from the Interior & from Fort Charlotte, or Pigeon River all took their Departure to the Interior again. There were extensive stores for Furs & Goods as out fits. There was a Clerk in charge with some men. There was then a Gentleman of a respectable [French] Canadian family in charge. Some few days later after we got a rest at the Lake Superior end of the Grand Portage, the late Simon McTavish who always called me Jack--told me Jack---you must cross the Portage to Fort Charlotte & dismiss Mr. Lemoine the Gentleman in charge, he is charged with some nasty tricks; tell him to deliver you his charge and keys---& come across; then give charge to another person whom I have forgot--& return yourself immediately ("Autobiographical Notes of John MacDonald of Garth," in Arthur S. Morton, ed. The Journal of Duncan M'Gillivray, 1929, p. lii).

I set off--& in my entrance into the House met Mr. Lemoine--& delivered my message. He demured & asked me to show him my orders. I pointed to my tongue & told him I got no other; he saw that it was useless to resist & set off as told, & I returned & reported.

Some days after, Mr. McTavish called me to him again & said Jack you must cross again, the opposition are picketing out a place for a Fort, too close to ours--with the intent of watching our movements. Go & try & . . . make them move farther off. There is a young Gentleman in charge. I consequently went over & told the young Gentleman (I think it was Allan Sandie McD.) that such was the case too nigh and that he must move some space farther. He replied that it was his Master who planted the Pickets, that he had no authority or Power to move such

Pickets, that he would be blamed if he did it & would not do it; I immediately said I am not told by any one to do it but to ask you to do it but [if] you will not do so I must I have not come over to no purpose--Saying which I suited the action to the word & pulled them up & threw them into the Pigeon River. He made no reply or resistance. I then returned across the Portage & reported what I had done which caused a general laugh amongst the Partners present who said that I was a bold boy. I was still considered a Boy--being but small & delicate" (Morton, 1929, p.liii).

The incident with the pickets is, of course, direct evidence on the start of an opposition depot at the western end of the Grand Portage. Macdonald wrote these recollections as an old man and his dates appear to be somewhat in error. He dated both incidents as having taken place in 1794, but in that year Simon McTavish was in England. Perhaps both events took place in 1797 or 1798 when the XY Company was commencing a strong opposition to the older and dominant firm.

Macdonald's first adventure is significant because he states that the firm had "extensive stores for Furs & Goods as outfits." This reflects the organization of the trade into outfits, each of which had its own geographical territory and which inevitably kept its own packs of furs, canoes, and equipment set apart and distinct when they were left at the Pigeon River depot. When departing into the interior again, the trade goods, foodstuffs, and equipment were organized and kept distinct by outfits at the depot on the eastern end of the portage. Their distinct character was maintained while being carried over the portage, while in storage there, and when being loaded into canoes for transit to the Northwest. The sheer necessity of keeping these outfits apart from others is a powerful argument for separate storage facilities, perhaps by department, and for a reasonably sophisticated system of inventory control (Innis, 1956, pp. 226-28).

In August of 1799, Alexander Mackenzie, was at the Grand Portage as the agent for the North West Company. While there, he sent off laden north canoes and made arrangements to take an inventory of the company's stocks of goods and supplies at Fort Charlotte. Bad weather had made it impossible to portage all of the packs of furs down to the depot on the bay. There were yet about 400 packs of furs in storage at Fort Charlotte (Lamb, 1970, p. 495).

The comments of Alexander Henry the Younger, who set out for the northwest from Fort Charlotte on July 20, 1800, are of more than casual interest:

Sunday, July 20th. The canoes having been given out to the men, to gum and prepare, I found everthing ready for our departure; and early this morning gave out to all their respective loading, which consisted of 28 packages per canoe, assorted for the Saulteur trade on Red river, namely:

Merchandise, 90 pounds each,	5 bales
Canal tobacco,	1 bale
Kettles,	1 bale

Guns,	1 case
Iron works,	1 case
New twist tobacco,	2 rolls
Leaden balls,	2 bags
Leaden shot,	1 bag
Flour,	1 bag
Sugar,	1 keg
Gunpowder,	2 kegs
High wine, 9 gallons each,	10 kegs
	-----
Total,	28 pieces"

(Gough, ed., Journal of Alexander Henry The Younger, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 5-6).

The expanding XY Company had establishments valued at 300 pounds sterling at both ends of the Portage in 1801 (Thompson, 1969, p. 104).

Henry's incidental note about giving out the north canoes to be gummed and prepared for the departure in advance of loading them with trade goods is indirect, but strong, evidence that they had been stored. At the least, they would have been housed in large warehouses. Perhaps the liquors and gunpowder kegs were even separated into more secure areas and kept under lock.

An anecdote concerning an XY Company "regale" which was customary upon the arrival from, and departure to, the wintering grounds is of more than casual interest. These events occurred a short distance westward from the upper end of the Great Carrying Place in 1802 and were narrated by George Nelson:

One of our brigades, fitted out I believe, for Fort des Prairies, slept as usual at Portage la Perdrix, only a few hundred yards from our Stores at the north end of the Grand portage, where they feasted & got drunk upon the "regale" that was always given them when they arrived from, or departed for, their winter quarters. When they arose the next morning they found thirty Kegs of High Wines (containing 9 Galls. ea.) had all run out! Upon examination it was found they had been bored with two gimlets holes each! (Bardon & Nute, 1947, p. 143).

Nelson's casual mention of "our Stores at the north end of the Grand Portage," simply confirms the conclusions drawn from inferences and random bits of information on the existence of a palisaded XY Co. depot with structures at the upper end of the Grand Portage. There can be little question but that this firm occupied and used facilities at this location through 1804, and perhaps into 1805.

George Heriot, writing between 1804 and 1806, provided this meager note concerning Fort Charlotte; it would seem probable that he was referring to the NW Co. facilities:

Fort Charlotte is placed upon the river la Tourte, which has a communication with the interior country; it consists of a stockaded

quadrangle, with buildings and stores within it" (Heriot, 1807, p. 203).

In 1816 the Earl of Selkirk was said to have built "a winter road" between Fort William and Fort Charlotte as one of his military activities against the North West Company. He may have also had a warehouse, a wintering dwelling and store at the upper end of the Grand Portage. It may well be that these structures were burned by the NWCo when it again gained control of Fort William in 1818 as Major Delafield makes no mention of them when he visited the area in 1823. (Gilman, 1992, pp. 101-2 & 150-1; Keating, William H., Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River. Reprint. (2 vols. in 1), p. 138, 1824. Minneapolis: Ross & Haines, Inc., 1959. & McElroy & Riggs, 1943, p. 406). Delafield made a reasonably detailed comment about the site which is below:

Pigeon River is at this point a pretty stream, about 30 yards wide, and just below the portage tumbles over rapids of considerable height but not having seen them all, cannot speak of the descent. The falls of Pigeon River near the lake are said to be 110 feet high. At this end of the Grand Portage, as at the other, there is scarcely a trace remaining of its former condition except the cleared ground. A few stumps of burnt pickets assist in tracing the extent of the former enclosures, and that is all. It is a pretty place & a profusion of wild roses & the sweet pea and high growth of grass, in the absence of all other considerations, afforded a momentary reconciliation to the spot. Fir trees and white birch are the trees of the adjacent country.

The landing place or dock of the old North West Co. is still entire and affords some accommodation. At night heavy rain. Temp. at sun set 60°; of Pigeon River 2 ft. from surface, 69° (Ibid, p. 406).

A map of the Grand Portage prepared at about the same time (1822) by Whistler (Map 6) depicts the portage in that year as crossing the remains of a large quadrangular outline which lay inland a short distance from the Pigeon River and to the right or east of Snow Creek. There is not much question but that this was the depot of the North West Company. A smaller square outline lay to the west and across Snow Creek. The odds are great that this was the depot of the XY Company from ca. 1798 to 1804 or it could have even been occupied as early as 1784 by an early rival firm, that of Peter Pangman, Gregory, McLeod & Company.

Newton H. Winchell, Minnesota's State Geologist, was at the Grand Portage at least three times in the years 1878, 1880 and 1893. Having more than a casual interest in historical matters, he recorded many facts. He made notes on the route and physical nature of the Grand Portage, its vegetation, and that it had been heavily wooded until 1873 when an accidental fire burned off a forest of pine, aspen, birch, spruce, tamarack, and cedar. All that was left was a strip about 2 miles wide that began 4 3/4 miles north of the Grand Portage Village and extended northwest along the portage. In 1880, Dr. Winchell made another long tour of the region. A third visit was made in 1893 which produced a map of the portage, and a well written description of it (Newton H. Winchell, Ninth Annual Report of the Minnesota Geological and Natural

History Survey, 1881, pp. 71-73; and The Geology of Minnesota, Vol. IV of the Final Report, 1899, pp. 500, & 504-505). He noted from traditional Indian reminiscences, that there had been two "forts" on the bay with houses, and barns for horses. His comments are now reproduced:

At the upper end of the portage was another similar establishment, and its ruins are still visible in the form of foundations that retain indistinctly their outlines, and in the old dock, made of cedar logs, which is held in place in the muddy bank of the river, and still serves as a landing for canoes.

.....  
 In 1893 there were sixty-seven cedar logs projecting from the bank near the level of the water, in the form of a platform, supported on other cedars running in the other direction and on stones. There were doubtless many more originally. They are decayed and frayed at the ends but permanently kept in place by the overlies of red clay on the landward ends (Winchell, 1899, p. 501.)

Available written records are largely blank concerning the Grand Portage and Fort Charlotte between 1893 and 1922. Local Indians continued to use it and it may well have been in heavy use during the early years of the twentieth century during logging operations on the adjacent Pigeon River. Fresh, new interest in the region commenced in 1922 because of the concern of Solon J. Buck, Superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society.

In April, 1922, A. H. Sawyer, a homesteader living in Mineral Center, and whose land was crossed by the portage, wrote to the Historical Society with the news that a neighbor of his had erected a "Road Closed" sign across the portage more than a year before. At about the same time, Edwin H. Hewitt, a Minneapolis architect, who canoed the Pigeon River, interested the Historical Society in searching records about the locality. C. C. Walker, a guide and hunter living at Grand Portage, visited the Society in early July of 1922 and informed Society officials of the danger to the remains of Fort Charlotte and the upper end of the portage (Solon J. Buck, 1923, The Story of the Grand Portage, Minnesota History, vol. 5, 1923, p. 27 & Woolworth & Woolworth, vol. 1, 1982, p. ix).

Mr. Walker also stated that the wooden walls of Fort Charlotte and the palisades around the enclosure had rotted to the ground, but that the outlines were all clearly visible, together with a cellar hole and two wells. Mr. Walker was also desirous that some steps be taken to preserve Fort Charlotte and the Grand Portage trail (Ibid).

This situation had arisen because of the Dawes Act of 1889 which authorized the extinguishment of Indian title to lands on reservations, and the sale of non-allotted lands. Basically, a reservation's lands were to be allotted to individuals, and the surplus thrown open to homestead entry. At Grand Portage, the land allotments were made in 1896. At this time, the reservation consisted of some 51,340 acres. Of this sum, 24,191 acres were allotted to qualified Indians; and 16,041 acres opened to homestead entry. A small amount of timber lands were sold to A. V. Johnson, Grand Marais, Minnesota; and to D. J. Arpin, Grand Rapids, Minnesota (Woolworth & Woolworth, vol. 1, 1982, p. ix).

In early July of 1922, Cecil W. Shirk, Field Secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society, and Paul Bliss, a feature writer for the Minneapolis Journal, visited Grand Portage village and walked up the historic portage to Fort Charlotte. Both men enthusiastically commented on the historic nature of the village, portage, and Fort Charlotte. Paul Bliss wrote an illustrated feature story for a Sunday edition of his newspaper ("Back Two Centuries Over Minnesota's Oldest Highway To Oldest Fort," Minneapolis Journal, July 16, 1922.)

Fortunately, Shirk also left a detailed journal which provides much information concerning this expedition. The portion of it which deals with Fort Charlotte is summarized here:

The party landed on Grand Portage Island about 4:00 A.M. on the morning of July 10, 1922. They were ferried across to the village of Grand Portage and obtained the services of Paul Le Garde as a guide who conducted them up the trail to the waters of the Pigeon River (Cecil W. Shirk, "Report on Expedition to Grand Portage, July 10th, 1922," Minnesota Historical Society Archives).

Two canoes were on the river bank at the end of the portage and were launched from this location. Old decayed timbers extended outward from the river bank for a distance of about six feet. Underneath them were others--old logs, so old and decayed that they were nearly gone. River overflows had deposited soil to a depth of about four inches over them. On the river bank, about ten feet away and parallel to the bank, were other old logs. These were about half a foot above water level. The men thought they were the remains of an old dock or wharf used during the fur trade era (Ibid.).

Dewey Albinson and his companion had explored this site a few days before. They believed that they had found a burial mound near a huge pine tree. Two separate areas with construction data had been found which were presumably palisaded depots of the trade. The outlines of several buildings were located and mapped. The first, or smaller clearing, contained a cellar hole about five feet deep which was surrounded by a ridge of earth forming the outline of a building foundation. In some places, this ridge was about a foot in height. The building was about 8' x 12.' East of this structure, and on the edge of the larger clearing, was the outline of another structure about 10' x 15' in size. Near these sites were found two lines of stones placed at right angles to each other. These remains are outlined on the map made by these men on August 10, 1922 (Albinson & Eastman Map, Minnesota Historical Society Archives). Albinson also made an excellent detailed photographic record of this work which was donated to the Historical Society. His photographic negatives and prints are carefully preserved.

#### Place Names Along the Grand Portage Trail

"Abita", bore the Ojibwe name for the halfway point on the Grand Portage.

"The Brook" five yards wide, flows into the Pigeon River was mentioned by David Thompson on August 6, 1822; August 24, 1822; June 30, 1823; June 19, 1824; and September 4, 1824. It was 15,240 feet or c. 2.87 miles northwest

of the South East end of the portage.

"The Carrying Place"; "Great Carrying Place"; Grand Portage, The Portage, "the Old Road" and Kitchi Onigum were all names for this historic route leading fromn Lake Superior to the Pigeon River and the northwest.

The Cascades Trail branches off from the Grand Portage about one half mile East of Fort Charlotte.

"the cut in the Hills of Brook", see "the Notch."

"The First Galle", was seen by David Thompson on September 5, 1824.

"The First River" is Grand Portage Creek as it turns east through a notch in a stone dike about two miles north of Grand Portage village. It was observed by David Thompson on July 22, 1822.

"Fort Charlotte" was mentioned by David Thompson on August 9, 1797; June 29, 1798; July 14, 1798 and August 8, 1822.

"The Fountain" was at or between the 8th and 9th poses up the portage from Lake Superior. Thompson mentions it August 10, 1822; August 23, 1822; June 30, 1823; August 21, 1823; June 19, 1824; September 4, 1824 & in an 1825 note. Thompson recorded that this feature was 4 miles and a few yards up the portage from its South East end.

"Grand Portage Creek, The Brook, The Little River are fur trade era designations or from a more modern era.

"The Meadow" or "Meadow Campment" was a grassy area, probably a pose and 10,560 yards or 6 miles up the Grand Portage from the North West Company depot. David Thompson mentions it on August 10, 1822; June 30, 1823; June 20, 1824; September 3, 1824 and in an 1825 note. Joseph Delafield visited it on July 12, 1823.

"Mount Rose, The Hill, The Mountain, Hill behind the fort, Sugar Loaf Mountain, Rose Hill and 'Mount Rosie'" are all from the fur trade era or were used by local Indians.

"A little mud hole called a spring" was noted by Joseph Delafield on July 13, 1823.

"the little Rill" was west of Poplar Creek and was noted by David Thompson on June 29, 1823; June 21, 1824; and perhaps on September 4, 1824.

"The Notch" was a cleft in a stone dike about 2 miles north of Grand Portage village. Grand Portage Creek and the portage passed through it. Also called the "cut in the Hills."

"The Parting Trees" were 1960 yards or slightly more than a mile up the Grand Portage from the west gate of the North West Company depot in 1797.

The Pigeon River was 14,376 yards or 8 miles and 888 feet up the Grand Portage from its South East end.

"Poplar River or Popple Creek", 3 miles North of Grand Portage village, was also called the Third River by Joseph Delafield. It was noted by David Thompson on June 23, 1823; June 30, 1823; August 20, 1823; August 21, 1823; and in an 1825 note. Thompson wrote that this stream was 4,783 yards up the portage from its South East end. A second "Poplar Creek" was farther up the portage.

"Poses" or "Rests" numbered 16 on the Grand Portage by the 1790'S, and 18 in 1822.

"The Public Road" laid out by Lieutenant Thomas Bennett in 1778 at the eastern end of the portage, still had this name in 1802.

"The Resting Place" is about one and one-half miles north of old Highway No. 61. This pose was traditionally known to the local Ojibwe Indians. It was about 100 feet north of the portage and was the site of a former spring. It is near the section line between Sections 25 & 26, T64N, R5E.

"Three Rills" preceded the "Brook" to those ascending the portage and were observed by David Thompson on June 30, 1823; September 5, 1824; and an 1825 note. The first rill was 220 yards up the portage; the second rill was 1840 yards; and the third rill was 2,510 yards up the portage from its South East end.

"The Second River" had a small grassy clearing and was about 3 miles North of Lake Superior. It appears to have been a pose and was noted by Joseph Delafield. David Thompson noted it on July 12, 1823.

"A small Ravine like a Brook" was noted by David Thompson on September 5, 1824 while descending the portage.

"The Spring" was North of the Second River and at an indefinite spot. It was used as a pose at times.

"Snow Creek" at Fort Charlotte, flows into the Pigeon River.

"The Third River" was about midway on the Grand Portage and was also called the Poplar River from nearby trees. It was commented on by David Thompson on July 13, 1823.

"The West Gate" of the North West Company depot was the starting point for David Thompson's 1798 measurement of the portage.

"The Writing Stones" were a location on the portage about 1 mile north of the post office. A large glacial boulder at this spot bore a date that may have been 1688 and the name, "George Naganib." Bureau of Indian Affairs records show that George Nah gah nub was born in 1858. He was given Grand Portage Allotment No. 145, described as S 1/2 SW 1/4, Section 26, T63N, R5E, 80 acres. He was married to Mrs. Nancy LaPlante (Will Leaf, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Minnesota Agency, Bemidji, Minnesota, to Nancy L. Woolworth, September 30, 1963). This stone was displayed in the Great Hall c. 1953 to 1969 but was destroyed in the July, 1969 fire (Cook County News



Herald, October 5, 1933, p. 1 & \*Observations on the Great Hall, 1969, by Alan R. Woolworth).

The "Place Names Along The Grand Portage" listed above are partially derived from a two page list at the end of the Thiessen Notes on the David Thompson Papers; other entries are in Woolworth & Woolworth, vol. 1, 1982, pp. 8-21).

In October, 1953, G. Hubert Smith made archeological tests at the site of this boulder and also did extensive research on its inscription. The Naganib family moved to Grand Portage from Fond du Lac, Minnesota in the 19th century and were well known to members of the Grand Portage band in the 1950's. Smith's notes on this work are in his papers at the Minnesota Historical Society. Many of Smith's manuscripts were obtained after his untimely death in 1972 by Alan R. Woolworth and were deposited at the Minnesota Historical Society.

\* Alan R. Woolworth worked at Grand Portage after the July, 1969 fire and was told that the large boulder had been destroyed in this conflagration.

## Chapter 8

### Chapter 8: Native Flora and Fauna on the Grand Portage Trail

The Grand Portage region was heavily glaciated about 10,000 years ago. Even today with a forest cover, the uneven topography, gravelly hills and ridges, sandy outwash plains, swamps and rock outcrops are prominent. The soils are light colored, acid, rather infertile and low in organic matter. Forests of the area are largely coniferous. During the 18th and 19th centuries there were large groves of sugar maple which were highly valued by the Ojibwe Indians for the sweet sap that could be boiled down into maple sugar. Other species of trees were yellow birch, aspen, and white pine. Wet and swampy ground had black spruce, tamarack, cedar, fir, white pine, alder, and white birch (Cleland, 1966, p. 9).

La Verendrye landed in Grand Portage Bay on August 26, 1731 and moved inland over the portage the next day. His forty or more voyageurs were dismayed at the length of the three league portage and refused to go over it (Burpee, 1927, pp. 437). It is very probable that they were also appalled at the conditions of the portage which does not appear to have been used extensively at this period. In June, 1732, La Verendrye returned to the Grand Portage and went over it to the northwest. He reported: "I took great care to improve all the portages by which we had to pass." He also noted that he had reduced the forty-one portages between Lake Superior and the northwest to thirty-two (Burpee, 1927, pp. 131, & 437-438). Unfortunately, La Verendrye did not mention vegetation along the portage.

Le Gardeur St. Pierre crossed over the Grand Portage in 1750 and recorded his impressions of the route in strong terms: "I should remark that this route is of the most difficult nature; great experience is necessary to know the roads. Bad as I had imagined them, I was surprised at the reality. There are thirty-eight carrying places; the first of these is four leagues," Here, St. Pierre is commenting on the entire system of portages leading to the northwest. Still, it is notable that he mentioned the Grand Portage and its length specifically after the La Verendrye family and their supporters had used it almost 20 years. Presumably, they would have improved it considerably (Brymner, Douglas, ed., 1886, "Memoir or Summary Journal of the Expedition of Jacques Repentigny Legardeur de Saint Pierre," Report on the Canadian Archives, p. clix).

In 1767, Jonathan Carver located the canoe landing site on Grand Portage Bay as being about one and one-half miles east of Mount Rose. By implication, the portage would have commenced near this location, and would have meandered northwesterly to a point east of Grand Portage Creek, and then northward (Parker, 1976, p. 172). At this date the area at the mouth of Grand Portage Creek was forested. It was cleared within the next two years (Nute, 1940, pp. 134 & 137).

Alexander Henry, the Elder, described his passage over the portage in considerable detail in 1775. He had 16 canoes, 54 men and a large quantity of provisions. His party appears to have carried their canoes over the

portage along with provisions, equipment and trade goods. It is probable that Henry kept his party together and slowly advanced from pose to pose over a week long ordeal. It "was a work of seven days of severe and dangerous exertion." He described the portage as consisting of two ridges of land with a deep valley between them which had meadowlands and a broad stream of water. The lowlands were covered mostly with birch and poplar; the higher areas had a pine cover (Bain, ed., 1901, p. 236).

In 1806, a competitor of the North West Company attempted to take trade goods over the Grand Portage. He was thwarted by a North West Company official who felled trees across the portage and creeks. Thus, the portage was closed for many years (Bumsted, ed., vol. 2, 1987, p. 71).

Dr. John Bigsby as secretary for the British Boundary Commission, went over the portage in 1822. He recorded that there is "...a ridge of maple growing on an argillaceous soil, which extends, at least, twenty miles westward from the Grand Portage. He furnished a few more details in another publication. There, he noted that a ridge of sugar maple trees stretched from Partridge Falls to the Fond du Lac vicinity. These extensive groves were much prized by the Indians as sources for delicious maple sugar (Bigsby, 1850, vol. 2, pp.202-03).

David Thompson went over the Grand Portage in 1797, 1798, 1822, 1823, and 1824. His invaluable notes have documented the types of vegetation along the portage. In 1822 he recorded that the portage was "excessively fatiguing as it was covered with an undergrowth of Cedar (?) and "Mountain herbage," and grass. The Southeast or lower end of the portage bore a plentiful crop of red raspberries the same year. In June, 1824 he traversed the portage again and commented that the path was obscured by young trees and willows that had been crushed down by the heavy winter snows. It was necessary to clear them away with an axe (Thompson Journals, Reel 5, Bound Volume 24, p. 58 2).

Many details about the portage are in the account of Major Joseph Delafield, American Commissioner for the boundary survey who traversed the portage in July, 1823. Notes made from his journal follow:

Friday, July 11, [1823]. ... the Rain obliges me to encamp. The corn and bread had already been considerably exposed by carrying it that far thro' the wet bushes. . . . the old road is so closed with a young growth of trees and bushes, that it is difficult to carry anything the size of a canoe piece ...

Saturday, July 12. . . . at the second river . . . At this place is a little clearing now covered with high grass.

Wednesday, July 14 [sic]. Encamp at Pigeon River . . . It is a pretty place & a profusion of wild roses & the sweet pea and high growth of grass, . . . Fir trees and white birch are the trees of the adjacent country (Major Joseph Delafield, The Unfortified Boundary, A Diary of the first survey

of the Canadian Boundary Line from St. Regis to the Lake of Woods.  
eds. Robert McElroy and Thomas Riggs, 1943, pp. 404-406).

Enroute over the portage in 1849, David Dale Owen, an Anglo-American geologist, noted that the high valleys had a heavy growth of timber, among which were many large poplars and white birch. On the tops of the ridges, red clay and marl bed were present (David Dale Owen, 1852, Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota, p. 408).

C.W. Hall, a geologist, on the Minnesota Geological and Natural History Survey noted that the dense undergrowth and windfalls on the Pigeon Point Reservation were much greater obstructions along the rivers than away from them (Winchell, 1881, p. 27).

Dr. Winchell commented on the extensive sugar maple groves in the northeast portion of Township 63N, R5E. Here the timber had not been destroyed by fire and much of it was birch and maple. This was perhaps the only area in northeastern Minnesota where sugar maples grew to a large size. The entire village of Grand Portage moved to the sugarbush to collect sap for making maple sugar in the latter part of March or the first of April, and returned in May (Winchell, 1899, pp. 503-504).

Winchell recorded much about the Grand Portage. In his opinion, it was still a good road, except where the bridges over the streams had not been replaced. Many American and Canadian parties had passed over it until the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway that was completed in 1885. It would soon be only an Indian trail obstructed by brush and fallen trees.

From the village of Grand Portage, the trail followed the creek about one and one-half miles before it left the valley of the creek. Then it continued in a northwesterly course. It crossed the Poplar River about 3 miles north of the village at an elevation of 498 feet above the lake. Next, there was a level tract one-half mile wide of red glacial clay, once heavily timbered. Passing the trail notch in the hill range, the trail descended about 70 feet to Poplar River and to a glacial plain about a mile wide. The trail followed this plain and soon rose, west of the creek, to the summit of the portage, 743 feet above the lake, about five miles from Grand Portage village. At a mile and a quarter from the Pigeon River the trail passed over a low bluff of trap rock (Ibid., 1899, pp. 503-06).

Noted Canadian historian George Bryce visited the isolated village of Grand Portage during the 1890's and mused on its historic past while walking over the abandoned portage (George Bryce, The Remarkable History of the Hudson Bay Company, 1900, pp. 94-95).

Cecil W. Shirk, field secretary of the Minnesota Historical Society, and Alan Bliss of the Minneapolis Tribune staff went by the steamer America to Grand Portage in July, 1922. Their goals were to visit the village of Grand Portage and to inspect the portage and Fort Charlotte at its upper end on the Pigeon River (Cecil W. Shirk, "Report On Expedition To Grand Portage, July 10th, 1922," Minnesota Historical Society Archives).

The beginning of the portage was easy to find as it had been cleared for about two miles as a possible route for a highway. The lower portion of the

trail was used perhaps a dozen times a year as a wagon road. Another section about two miles long had not been used for wagons for some years. Another segment about three miles from the village was difficult for travel as underbrush had spread over it. Near the upper end of the trail, there was little evidence of wagon traffic. Here, there was only a narrow path. No stumps were present on the trail and the path was well beaten and firm except where horses had tramped through muddy spots (Ibid.).

For the first two miles, the portage rose gently, passing through birch and poplar trees ranging from three to eight inches in diameter. Shirk did not see any large, old trees. Pine trees appeared two miles north of the village and by five miles had begun to predominate. Later, birch and poplars appeared in large numbers. The first really large tree seen was a hugh pine about one-half way up the portage. Then, more and more of them were seen up to the Pigeon River. Vegetation was dense all along the portage, but the trees were not thick enough to shut out sunlight. Evidence of old forest fires was noted (Ibid.).

Many smaller plant species were noted. Buttercups, and dark purple prunella constantly underfoot. Most clearings were filled with tall, showy fireweed. Cow parsnip was frequent with yellow and black-eyed daisies less common. Blossoms of wild grapes were also observed as was yarrow. Patches of wild strawberries were seen in most clearings (Ibid).

There were four places on the portage where detours had recently been made around large trees that had fallen across the portage. This made Mr. Shirk uncertain to claim that they had followed the original portage from end to end. He thought that there was a possibility that detours could become permanent, though it was just as probable that the trail could have gone back to its original location once the fallen trees were gone. The portage soil was firmly packed from the thousands of feet that had walked over it. This made it identifiable even in 1922 (Ibid.).

Nowdays, the portage was used by three or four white homesteaders who lived along it. A few local Indians used it to go to the Pigeon River area. In winter months, a few hunters and trappers traversed it. Two canoes were seen at the Pigeon River. At the cascades of this stream the forest on the Canadian side had been denuded as far as the eye could see. On the American side, loggers had cleared a space nearly a mile square. On the Pigeon River near Fort Charlotte was a thick growth of pine, birches and poplars. Fort Charlotte itself was covered with brush, especially hazel brush and thorn apples. Maps 1 and 19 show natural features and remnant maple groves.

It must be noted that no mentions of wildlife along the portage were found in traveler's narratives. Perhaps most wildlife was frightened away by the portagers. Also, it is probable that individuals on the portage focused closely on the weather, condition of the portage and other factors associated with this experience.

## Chapter 9

### Chapter 9: Archeological Research Along the Grand Portage Trail and Recommendations for Future Research Along It

No systematic archeological investigations have been made on the Grand Portage "Trail;" they have been incidental and during the course of other explorations. E. Dewey Albinson and Alvan C. Eastman worked at the site of Fort Charlotte in July and August of 1922 for the Minnesota Historical Society. Their accomplishments were remarkable and were done on a minimal budget under adverse conditions. They produced a unique field map which is priceless and often reproduced. Another invaluable record was a large series of annotated photographs and negatives. These materials are notable among the Society's records. It was my privilege to know Dewey Albinson and to talk with him about this great adventure of his youth.

Initial underwater archeological explorations were made at Fort Charlotte in 1961, 1963 and July, 1971 when divers of the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project made brief visits to this location. More systematic explorations were made in July and October, 1972 and June, 1973 by teams led by Douglas A. Birk for the same organization. A general report on this work as well as a preliminary artifact description by Birk was published in (Robert C. Wheeler et al., ed., 1975, pp. 37, 39, 44, & 85-93).

A proton magnetometer survey was made at Fort Charlotte in 1978 by Robert Nickel of the Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service, Lincoln, Nebraska. A report was written on the results. More detailed mapping was undertaken at the site in 1979 and proton magnetometer investigations were also continued by staff members of the Center (Robert Huggins and John W. Weymouth, "A Magnetic Survey of Fort Charlotte, Grand Portage National Monument," & Bruce A. Jones, "Historic Site Archeology at Fort Charlotte Grand Portage National Monument, Minnesota," 1980.)

#### Future Archeology Along the Grand Portage

Well planned archeological investigations at key locations along this portage have a great potential to furnish historical and interpretive data on its use over many centuries by American Indians, French and British traders as well as American citizens. These sites also have an unmatched potential for on site interpretation and could be developed to encourage more use of the portage and would enrich the visitor's experience.

The 16 to 18 poses are the choice sites for initial archeological investigation with metal detectors. This technique has worked well to locate poses on the Savanna Portage in Aitkin County, Minnesota. Many of the poses on the Grand Portage will be found on both sides of the small streams crossing the portage. Potable water was essential to cook the voyageur's lyed corn rations and was needed for drinking especially if the weather was hot. Investigations could also be made at the "notch" where the portage passes through a cleft in a diabase dike. Other poses may be situated after the route goes over steep hills, rough ground or wet, boggy

locations. Some of the more choice sites which once had grassy meadows would also have been good camping areas. An obvious start would be to select half a dozen sites along the portage with good camping locations and water sources; they could be swept with metal detectors and tested with small excavations.

Another promising area of investigation would be to make a careful collation of David Thompson's survey notes, from his three separate surveys of the Grand Portage. These could be indexed by distances along the portage, key geological or geographical features, and their place names as listed in his notes. This would lead to the elimination of some duplicate sites and would point more specifically to locations used for camping or poses.

Still another obvious line of future investigation would be to field a small survey team of perhaps three trained surveyors to make a re-survey of the portage from Thompson's field notes, and to make detailed maps, photographic records, etc. to permanently record the more notable features and courses of this historic portage. It is possible that this methodology could provide a large body of interpretive data for future use along the portage. An examination could also be made of the available aerial photographs which were little used during the present study.

Investigations should be made in cooperation with the Grand Portage Band of Chippewa to locate the traditional Indian villages near the eastern end of Grand Portage Bay. This suggestion is made because this location appears to be the site of the prehistoric and early historic commencement of the Grand Portage. It would have also been the site where hundreds of Indians from the northwestern tribes camped when they came to the Grand Portage Bay to trade with local Indians or French traders before the coming of British traders.

## Chapter 10

### Chapter 10: History of Land Use Along the Grand Portage Trail

From about 1768 to 1805 British fur traders controlled the land at the start of the Grand Portage. When they removed to Thunder Bay in British North America the land reverted to the local band of Chippewa Indians. From 1836 into the 1840's the American Fur Company operated a fishing station in the area east of the mouth of Grand Portage Creek. Many local men worked as fishermen or in packing fish in barrels for shipment. In 1854 the Grand Portage band signed the Treaty With The Chippewa, 1854 ceding their lands along the north shore of Lake Superior. In return, the Pigeon River Reservation was created for them (Charles J. Kappler, Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties, vol. 2, 1904, pp. 648-652).

Gradually, governmental services in the form of annuity goods, foods, and tools, were provided. A school was built, and efforts made to educate all who were willing to learn. Houses were built, and equipment provided for farming on the harsh, rocky terrain. In 1856, a village plat was surveyed and lots of 99 by 198 feet were staked out. A lot was given to each Indian who would build a house on it. A warehouse was built near the beginning of the portage for storage of annuity goods. A wharf was also built nearby and the U.S. Indian Department essentially controlled the area up to c. 1940. Over the years, two sets of Indian Service structures were erected on or near the beginning of the portage (Woolworth & Woolworth, 1982, vol. 1, p. 190).

By 1871, hopes that farming would work had faded; fortunately, wild rice was plentiful and fishing was productive. Gradually, many of the Indian men found work as packers to carry food and equipment from the lake into Canadian areas being explored for minerals. Others worked as lumberjacks in the woods or hunted, fished and trapped in the winter. In the early 1880's many local residents moved to Grand Marais for work on a large government harbor project. By 1900 logging on local forests had developed. Many people now cut and sold timber from their allotments (Ibid, pp. 193 & 198).

The Dawes Act of 1887 authorized the allotment of reservation lands to individual Indians and the sale of non-allotted lands. An agreement between the Grand Portage Band and the U.S. government in 1889 authorized this program for their reservation. Once lands had been surveyed and allotted to individuals, the surplus was purchased by the federal government and opened to homestead entries. At Grand Portage, land allotments were made in 1896. At this date, the reservation consisted of about 51,340 acres. Now, 24,191 acres were allotted to qualified Indians and 16,041 acres were opened for to homestead entry. A small amount of timber bearing land was sold to A.V. Johnson, Grand Marais, Minnesota and to D.J. Arpin, Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Pigeon River Lumber Company was formed in the fall of 1900 to log on this river and



continued to cut pine trees up to 1919 (Elinor Barr, Lumbering in the Pigeon River Watershed, Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Paper and Records, vol. 4, 1976, pp. 3-9 & Joint Report Upon The Survey and Demarkation Of The Boundary Between The United States And Canada, pp. 31-3, 1931.

In June, 1907, advertisements in local newspapers offered reservation timber to commercial firms. Dangerous forest fires swept down on Grand Portage village in 1908, destroying timber. By 1909 population had declined as many local resources were exhausted. Most land within Grand Portage village belonged to the local band. Efforts at subsistence farming were gradually abandoned. Homesteads were made along the upper portions of the Grand Portage about 1912 and hopeful settlers began to hack out clearings and to build houses (Ibid, pp. 198-199).

A few random notes from 1915-1916 issues of the Cook County Herald, shed light on continued local use of the portage:

May 16, 1915. James Morrison and family made 800 pounds of maple sugar on the 'Old Sugarbush Trail' about halfway to Swampy Lake."

-----, Joe Fisher with the government team took two canoes up to the Pigeon River.

May 20, 1915. (Building a road to Port Arthur, Ontario.)

July 1, 1915. Joe Hunter and Jerome Naganib finished brushing out a new road along the lake shore to Godfrey Montferand's house.

August 26, 1915, (News of the first automobile over the new road to Port Arthur, Ontario.)

December 16, 1916. W.H. Foote from Port Arthur arrived in Grand Portage. He had to ford the Pigeon River as there was no bridge across it.

A local crisis developed when settlers encroached on the Grand Portage. One of them even placed a "Road Closed" sign across the portage c. 1921. A few local residents contacted the Minnesota Historical Society and asked for assistance to preserve the portage and the remains of Fort Charlotte. This aroused the interest of Dr. Solon J. Buck, superintendent of the Historical Society and led to the long term involvement of this institution at Grand Portage (Notes on Activities of the Minnesota Historical Society at Fort Charlotte in 1922. Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Minnesota Historical Society, 1923:28-29) & Woolworth & Woolworth, vol. 1, p. ix, 1982).

In July, 1922, E.Dewey Albinson and Alvan C. Eastman, under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society, came to Grand Portage to explore the portage and Fort Charlotte. Fortunately, these men prepared a detailed map of the site. Cecil W. Shirk, field secretary, Minnesota Historical Society, also visited the area and wrote a detailed account of his visit which is

summarized. The start of the portage was easy to find for its first two miles had been cleared by local residents in anticipation of a possible highway. Now, the route was a wagon road, being used perhaps a dozen times a year. There was much evidence to show that the portage had been in continuous use for many years. As an example, there were no tree stumps in the path. The ground was beaten and firm except where horses had gone through muddy spots (Cecil W. Shirk, "Report On Expedition To Grand Portage, July 10th, 1922,").

Three or four settlers had hacked out small clearings in the brush along the route. The first clearing, about two miles north of the village was that of C.C. Walker. Two miles farther, they crossed Highway No. 1 which led to Fort William, Ontario. A second clearing was about one-half mile inland from the highway crossing. Three miles farther from the highway was the clearing of A.O. McGrath. At each claim, from one to three acres had been cleared and a cabin or shack erected (Ibid.).

At this date, the route was used by the three or four homesteaders along its course, by local Indians going to the Pigeon River, and a few hunters or trappers in the winter. Two canoes were found near the upper end of the portage indicating that local people still used a site above the rapids to launch them (Ibid.).

Archeological work commenced on the North West Company depot site in 1936-38 on land belonging to the Grand Portage band of Chippewa Indians. This led to the reconstruction of the Great Hall and a stockade surrounding the depot. In 1958 this land and much of the portage was donated to the federal government and became the Grand Portage National Monument (Woolworth & Woolworth, vol. 1, 1982, pp. 225-226).

In more recent years, the National Park Service historian Erwin N. Thompson has prepared a Master Plan, 1973 for the monument which cites the basic objectives of "preserving an area containing unique historical values;" "To recreate the historic scene;" and "To interpret the role of the Grand Portage." Monument superintendent Anthony L. Andersen wrote an Interpretive Prospectus for the monument in 1981 and an Environmental Assessment in 1986. National Park Service historian Ron Cockrell prepared an Administrative History for the monument in 1982 that was revised in 1983.

## Chapter 11

### Chapter 11: Summary and Conclusions

Grand Portage National Monument lies on the rugged north shore of Lake Superior in extreme northeastern Minnesota. It is composed of a partially restored late 18th century fur trade depot; the unique Grand Portage "trail"; and Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River. The "Great Carrying Place" or Grand Portage originated in prehistoric times as a route around impassable chasms and rapids in the lower Pigeon River. It led from a quiet, sheltered bay on Lake Superior for more than eight miles to the Pigeon River. This waterway was the gateway to the fur rich region of Rainy Lake, the Lake of the Woods, the Red River of the North, the Saskatchewan, and the Athabasca Country. Several tribes of Indians lived in the region until the coming of French traders c. 1660 who controlled it until 1760. British traders dominated this northern fur trade empire until they moved to the mouth of the Kaministiquia River shortly after 1800. The new United States of America gradually took possession of the Grand Portage area in the nineteenth century.

The Grand Portage "trail" is the monument's major historic resource, but until now there has not been a comprehensive study to guide cultural resource preservation, natural resources management, and the interpretation of this unique asset. More research and planning is needed to provide specific data to guide future archeological research, historic preservation, and interpretive uses of the historic portage. Collectively, this information can become portions of a Trail Management Plan.

The Scope of Work for the present study outlines ten areas of research which relate to the nature, uses and history of the Grand Portage from late prehistoric times into the nineteenth century.

Centuries ago northern American Indians began the development of their graceful portable birch bark canoes. This technological innovation opened the waterways of northern North America and associated forested lands to the American Indian. A closely related invention was the portage collar which was a broad leather strap used to pack baggage over a portage. Stored food supplies were also essential to the survival of these Indians and an integrated aspect of their lifeways. In the spring they camped at maple sugar tree groves to collect and condense maple sap into maple sugar, a staple food source in the northern forested region. Of equal importance was the processing and storing of wild rice which provided another staple food supply for these Indian peoples and the fur traders.

American Indians and fur traders regarded a portage as a carrying place between water routes. Portages were distinguished from roads by their relatively short distances and the portager's need to carry their canoes and supplies with from one waterway to another (Vogel & Stanley, 1991, p.2).

The history of the European fur trade and the exploration of the Northwest does not accurately reflect the importance of portages in the development

of regional transportation systems. Increasingly, scholars are coming to view portages as vital connecting links in a continent wide transportation system. They were major features in the historical geography of the fur trade.

Portages developed informally and spontaneously as venacular landscapes and cultural landforms with recognizable attributes such as topography, vegetation, place names, camp sites, and buried archeological deposits (Vogel & Stanley, 1991, p. 12).

There have been only a few minor studies of portages as archeological sites. Indeed, their study has scarcely begun. Most portages of medium length had camps at their terminals. Often, there were camps at mid points where there were creeks, permanent springs, or grassy areas. Every long or difficult portage had poses or resting places that served as resting places for weary voyageurs and temporary collection points for portaged materials. Camps were often at their ends and mid points.

Three key geographical features at the Grand Portage locality made it the best water route between the upper great lakes and the northwest. These were: (1) a sheltered bay on the north shore of Lake Superior with level land for trading facilities; (2) a relatively easy portage around the impassable lower Pigeon River; and (3) the Pigeon River itself which was an excellent natural waterway leading to the Northwest (Woolworth, in: Where Two Worlds Meet, by Carolyn Gilman, 1982, p. 110).

The Grand Portage lies well within the Canadian biotic province with a rugged, glaciated terrain, poor soils and a cool climate. The region had heavy stands of timber around lakes and streams. Dominant tree species were coniferous, but a few localities had maple sugar groves. Fir, pine, spruce, tamarack, cedar, white birch and aspen were common species.

Large animals were comparatively scarce. Fish formed a more stable food resource, but survival was heavily dependent on the collection and preservation of wild foods such as maple sugar and wild rice. These factors restricted Indian population growth.

Despite these drawbacks, the Grand Portage served as a passage to the northwest for centuries into the prehistoric era. The coming of Europeans and manufactured trade goods began an extensive fur trade era over the Grand Portage.

The recorded French fur trade over the portage began in August, 1731 when the great explorer, Pierre Gaultier de La Verendrye landed in Grand Portage Bay and sent men, canoes and trade goods to Rainy Lake. The La Verendrye family were succeeded c. 1750 by James Legardeur, sieur de St. Pierre. The last prominent French trader was the Chevalier de La Corne; French trade over the portage closed c. 1760.

The British conquered Canada in 1759 and their merchants went rapidly into the upper great lakes region. By 1761, they were at the Grand Portage and went into the northwest. By 1767 they were wintering among Indian tribes and a fur trade rendezvous had begun at the Grand Portage. The British

trade grew swiftly; by 1775 large quantities of trade goods and supplies were taken to Grand Portage and associations of traders cooperated. A firm informally called the "North West Company" developed by 1778 and was reorganized in the mid 1780's under shrewd financiers. This company grew rapidly and within a few years dominated the fur trade of the northwest. Around 1785-1787, it erected a great inland fur trade depot near the western end of Grand Portage Bay. Diplomacy to end the American Revolutionary War gave the newly formed United States the area below the mouth of the Pigeon River. By 1802, the North West Company had moved to the mouth of the Kaministiquia River in British North America.

British and American attention on the Grand Portage renewed in the 1820's with a number of detailed surveys made of the portage. The most detailed work was done by the British geographer, David Thompson. Comparable American surveys were also made.

There are many portages and trails in the vicinity of Grand Portage Bay with most of them associated with the local Ojibwe Indian food quest. Some of these routes are centuries old and a few of them are still in use as roads today. Most of them are depicted on Map 19.

The alignment of the Grand Portage appears to have been closely associated with geological forms along its route and has probably changed little since the late 18th century. Most maps from the 1820's onward give the same form to the portage. David Thompson made detailed course records of at least two of his measured surveys along this portage. These notes can be used to study the route in detail today and for comparison with its course in the 1820's, and the earlier fur trade era. Little information is available concerning temporal or seasonal changes in the Grand Portage routes or alignments.

A wealth of information is at hand concerning the European manufactured goods carried over the Grand Portage for trade. In general terms, these objects transformed Indian life, made it more productive and rewarding. The fur trade also introduced firearms and alcoholic liquors in great quantities. Liquor devastated many tribes and caused great hardships. Other imports such as cloth were substantial contributions to Indian life.

Much space and effort has been devoted to providing detailed data on the physical and locational aspects of the portage. It appears pointless to attempt to summarize it here. Among the key features of the portage are its series of twenty eight place names which relate mostly to water courses across the portages with a few of them being tied to probable poses or camp sites.

Much information concerning the native flora along the portage is given in Chapter Eight. Most of it deals with the listing of tree species observed along the portage by travelers. It would be rewarding to tabulate and compare this information in a chronological manner and also at different key points along the route. Some of this information might be useful in restoring vegetation in some areas along the portage. A study should be made of the relict maple groves used by the Grand Portage band of Ojibwe. Many of them are shown on Map 19.

Only a very little archeological research has been done along the portage and most of it relates to Fort Charlotte. There, many fur trade structures were mapped by Albinson and Eastman in 1922. The site then lay untouched until the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project worked there off of Fort Charlotte in 1961, 1963, and 1971. National Park Service archeologists began work at Fort Charlotte in 1978 with proton magnetometer surveys that ended in 1980. A small amount of archeological work was done by Alan R. Woolworth at the Southeast end of the portage adjacent to Lake Superior in 1962 ("Archeological Excavations at Grand Portage National Monument in 1962." By Alan R. Woolworth, 1968).

It is probable that archeological research and tests along the portage would locate at least half a dozen poses and a number of allied features such as temporary camps. These locations would have a great potential for on-site-interpretation of the portage and would serve to encourage visitation and to enrich the experiences of visitors. Comparatively little information is provided in Chapter Ten on the History of Land Use along the Portage. This subject has been covered in detail for the fur trade era and well into the 19th century. The major resource for additional information on the use of the Grand Portage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries lies in the Grand Marais, Minnesota newspapers. Those can be readily examined by the monument historian or other staff members in future winter months.

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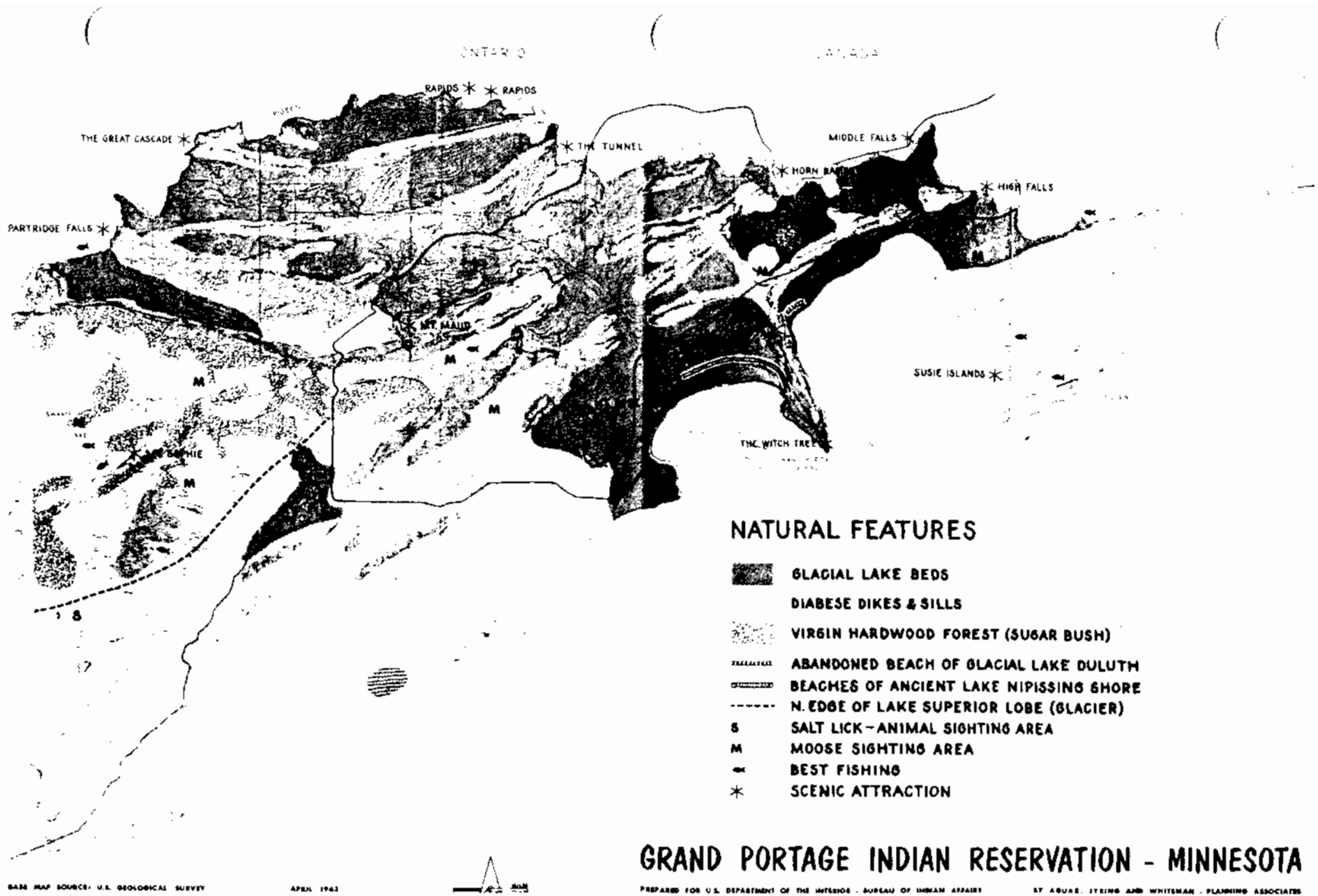
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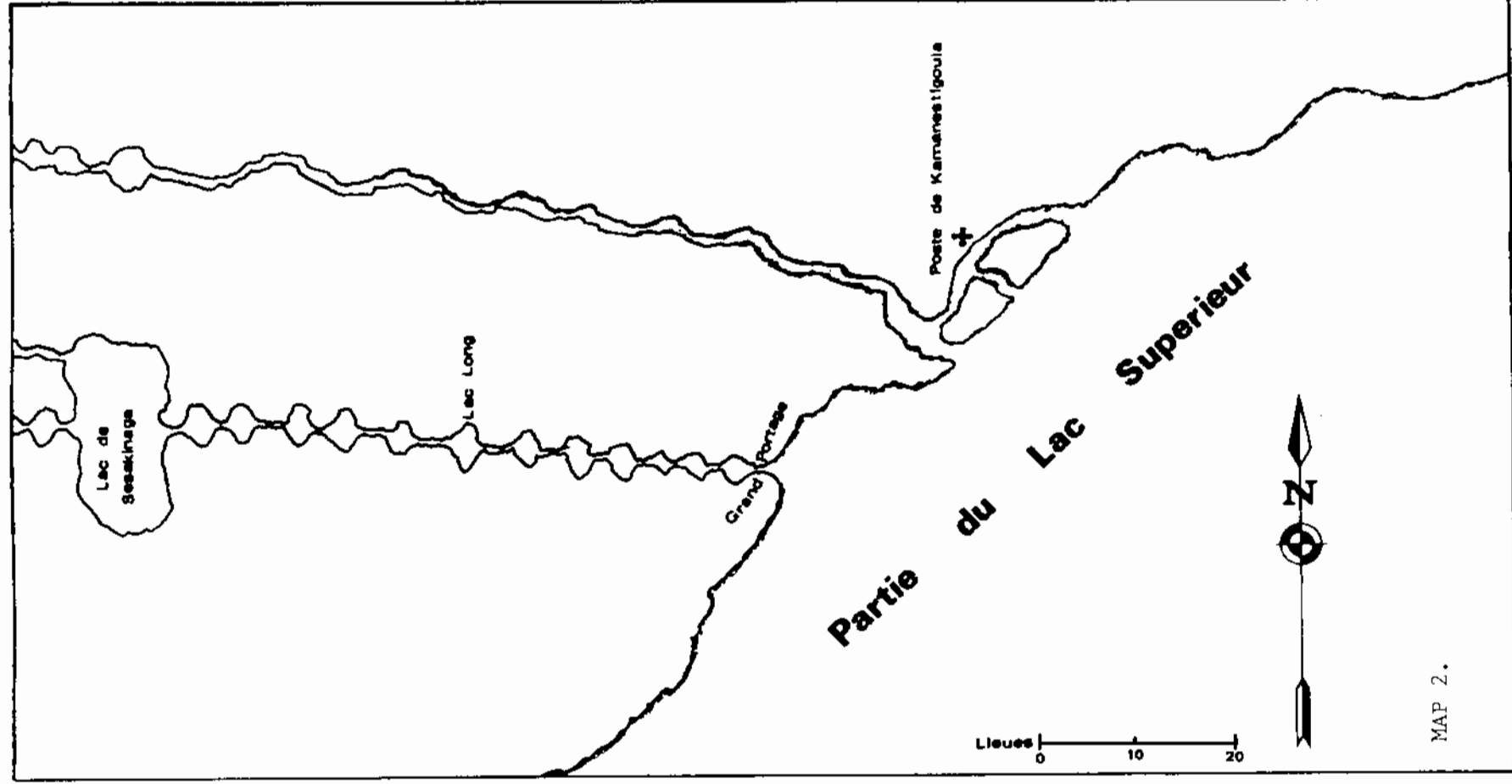
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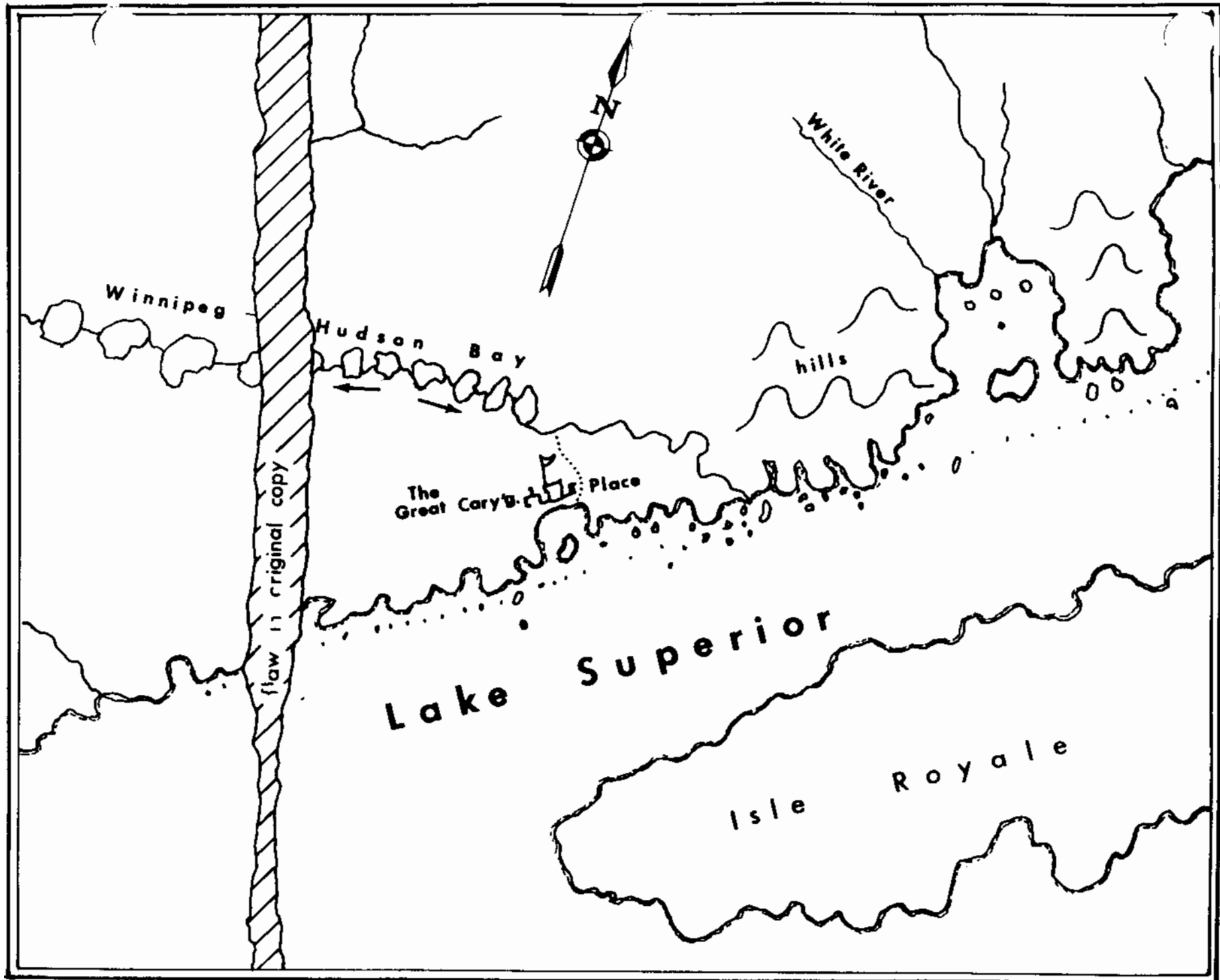


## GRAND PORTAGE INDIAN RESERVATION - MINNESOTA

MAP 1. NATURAL FEATURES of the GRAND PORTAGE INDIAN RESERVATION, MINNESOTA.







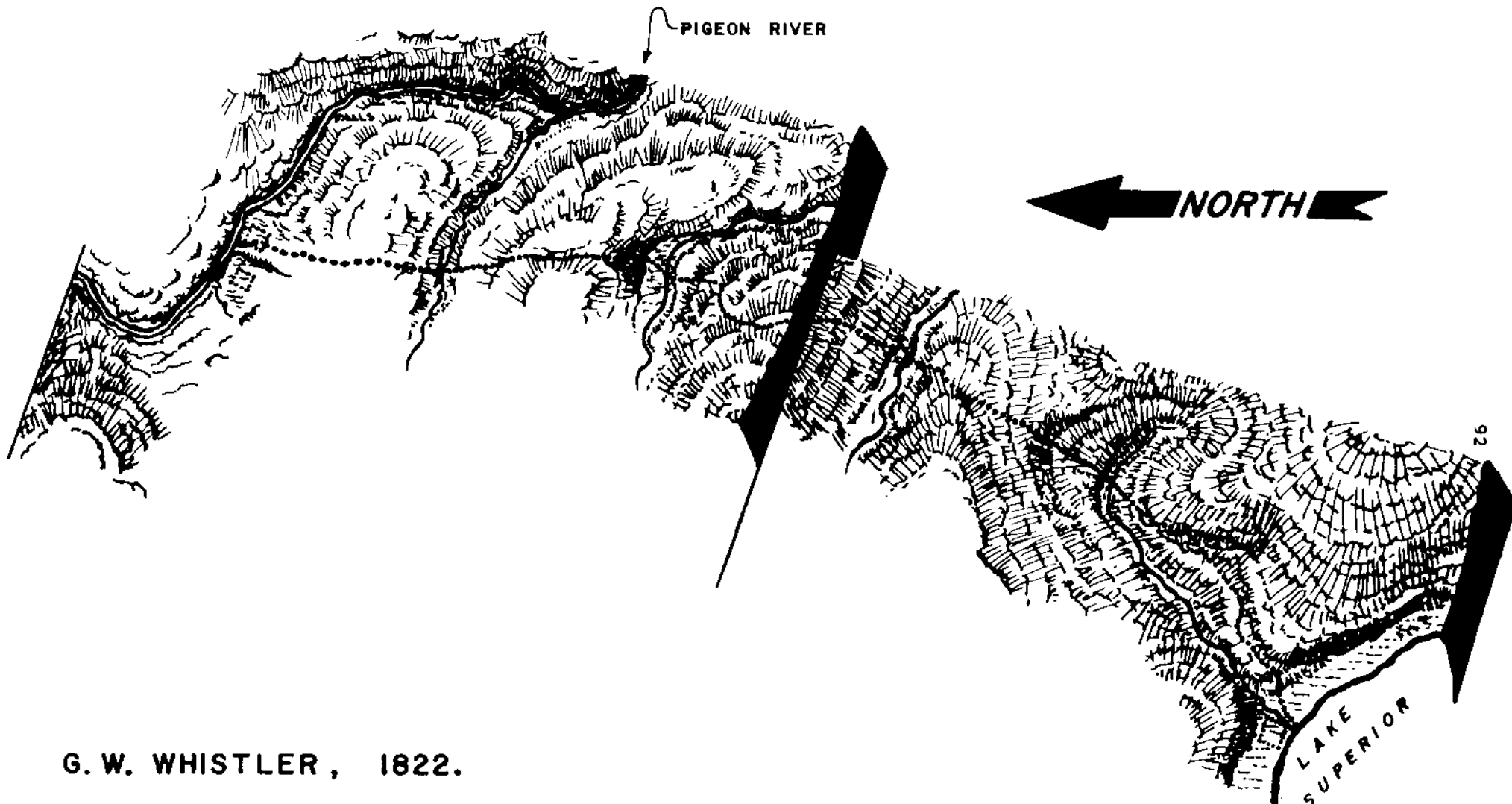
MAP 3. "The Great Carrying Place". Adapted from J. Carver, 1778



**N<sup>o</sup> 1**  
**MAP OF**  
**A PART OF**  
**CERTAIN SURVEYS ALONG THE**  
**WATER COMMUNICATIONS**  
**NORTHWARD OF**  
**LAKE SUPERIOR**  
**COMMENCING AT THE MOUTH OF THE**  
**PIGION RIVER**  
**and extending**  
**WESTWARD TO**  
**LAKE NAMEKAN**  
**MADE BY ORDER OF**  
**THE HONORABLE THE COMMISSIONERS**  
**under the 26th and 28th articles**  
**OF THE**  
**TREATY OF GENT**

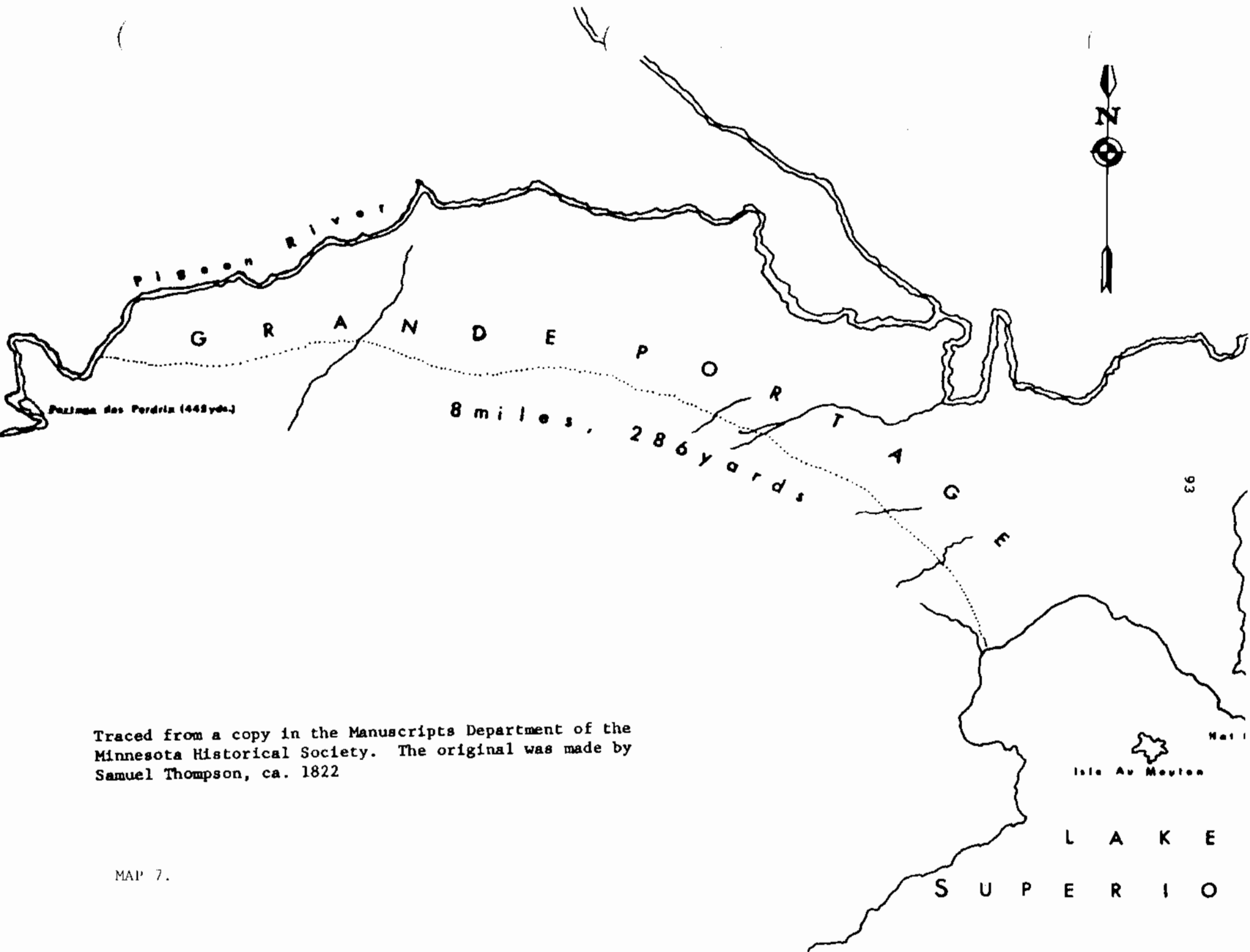


MAP 5.



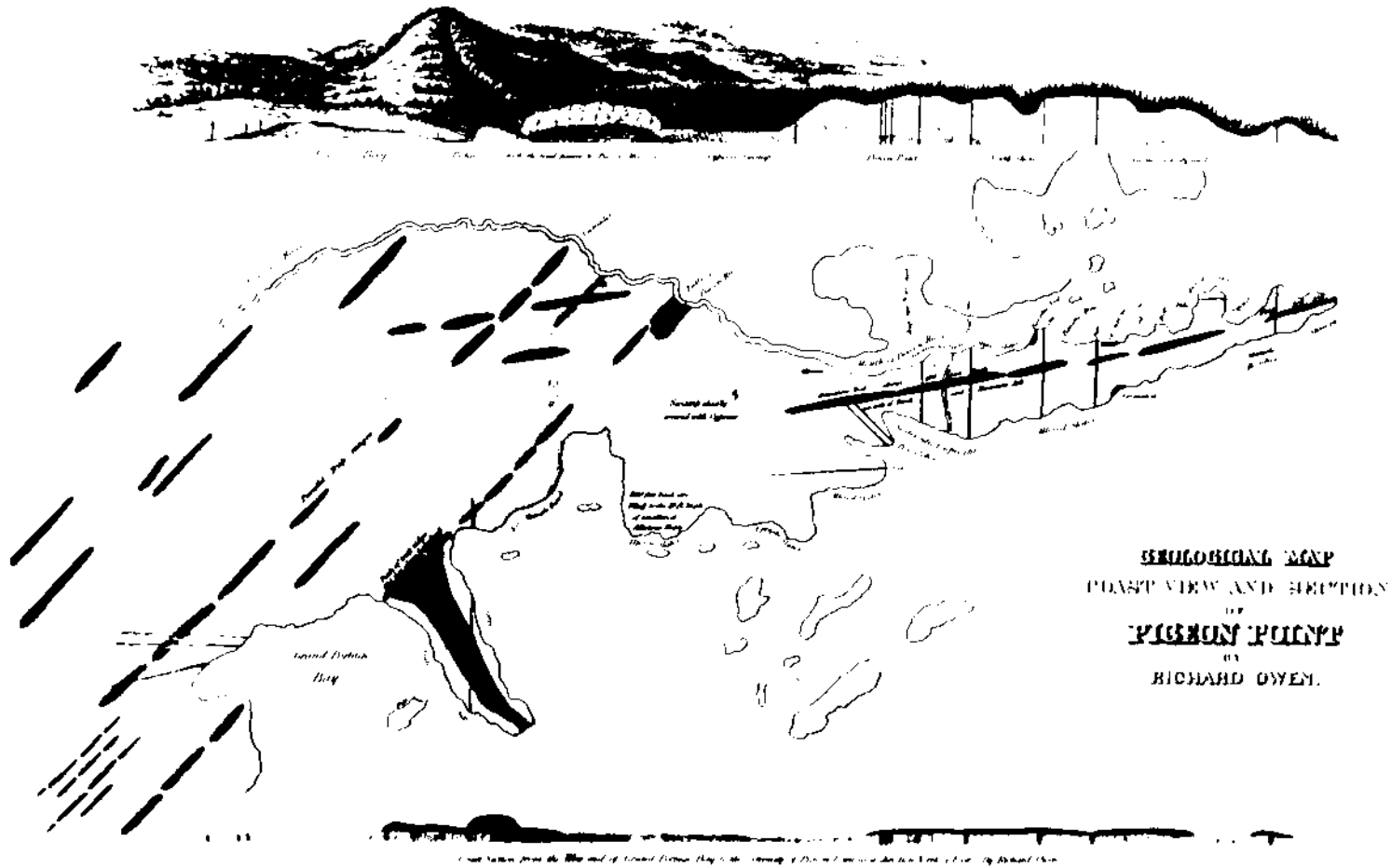
G. W. WHISTLER, 1822.

MAP 6. The Grand Portage in 1822 as Recorded by G. W. Whistler

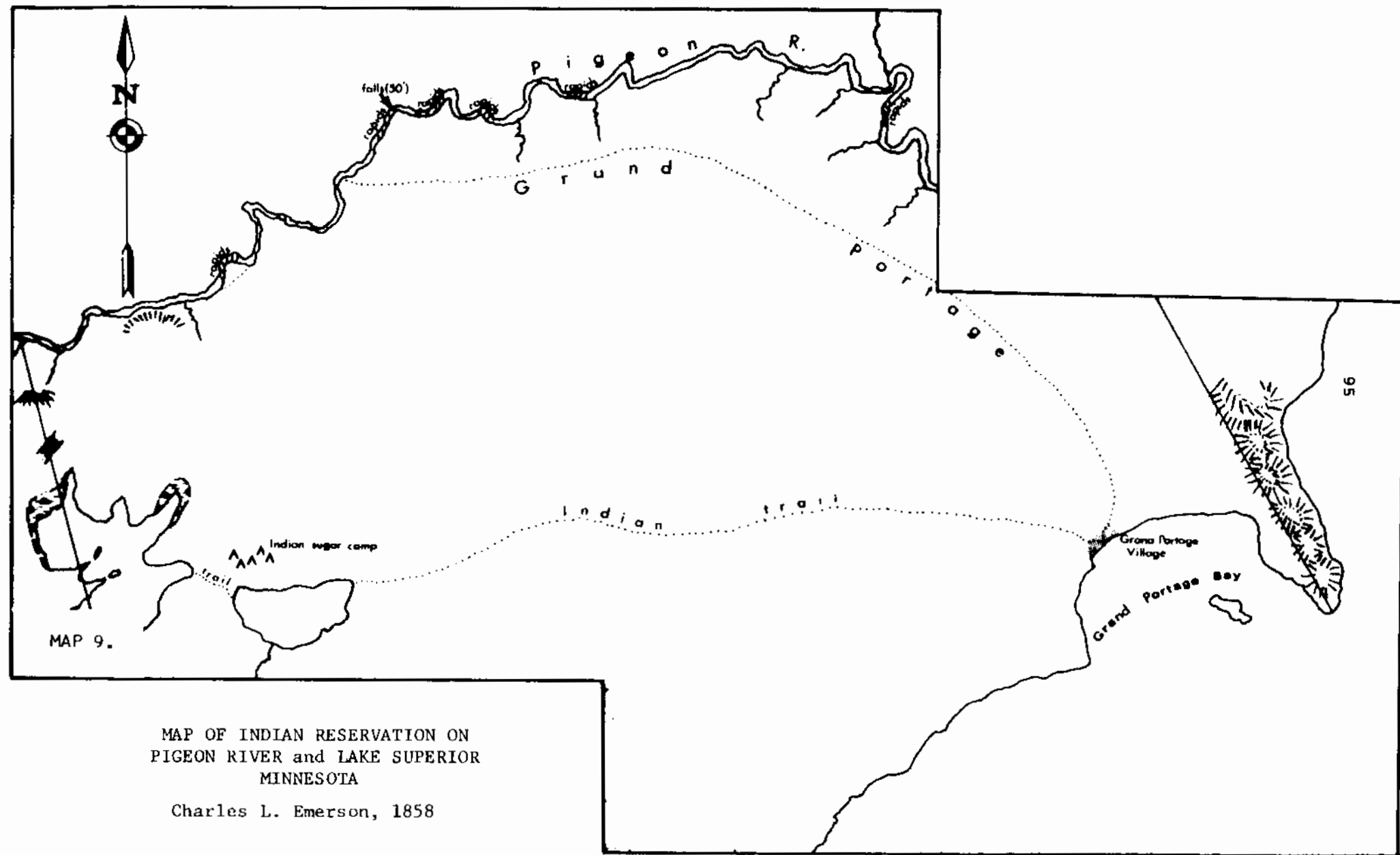


Traced from a copy in the Manuscripts Department of the Minnesota Historical Society. The original was made by Samuel Thompson, ca. 1822

MAP 7.



MAP 8.

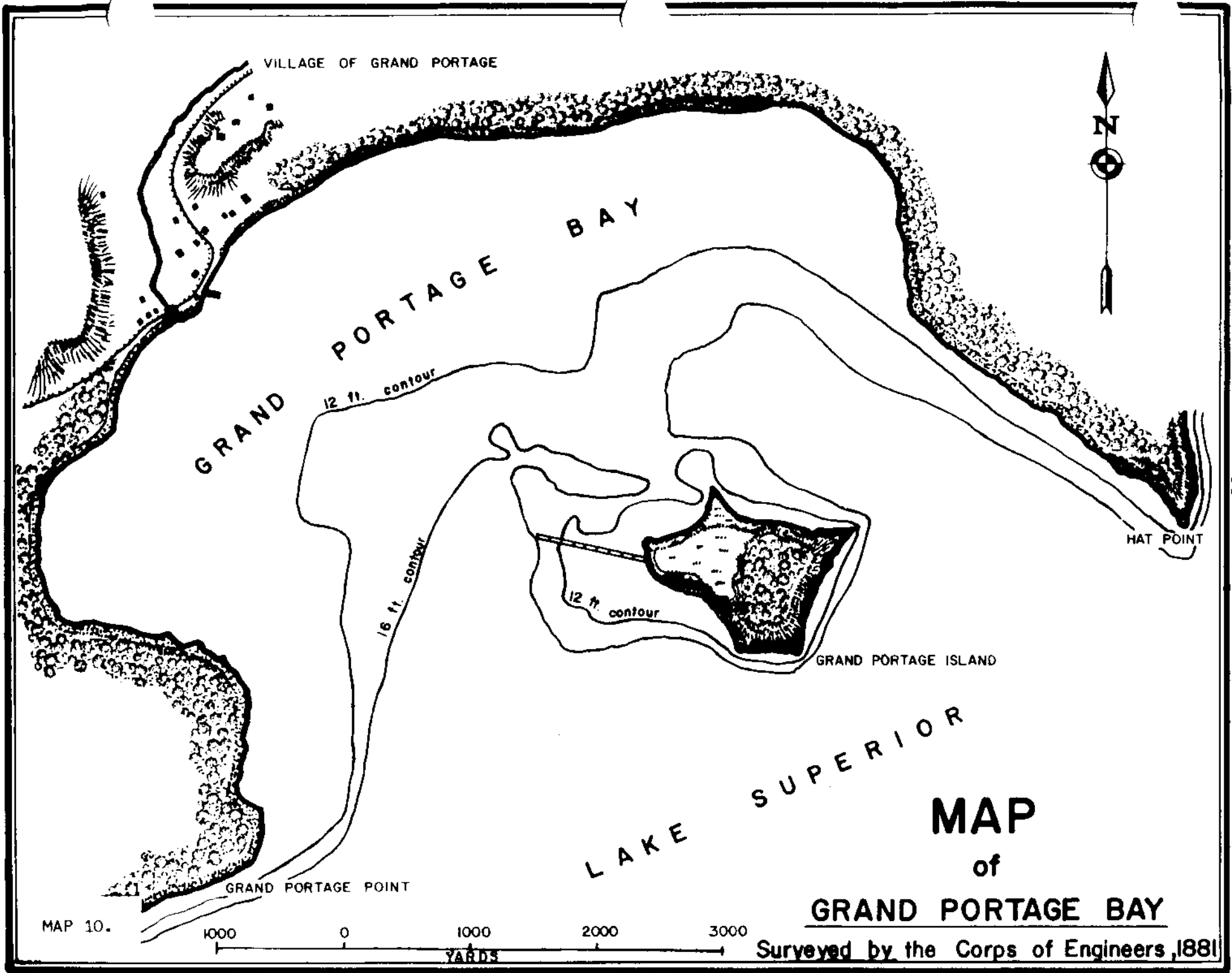


MAP OF INDIAN RESERVATION ON  
 PIGEON RIVER and LAKE SUPERIOR  
 MINNESOTA

Charles L. Emerson, 1858

Scale 40 Chains to an Inch





VILLAGE OF GRAND PORTAGE

GRAND PORTAGE BAY

12 ft. contour

16 ft. contour

12 ft. contour

GRAND PORTAGE ISLAND

HAT POINT

GRAND PORTAGE POINT

LAKE SUPERIOR

MAP

of

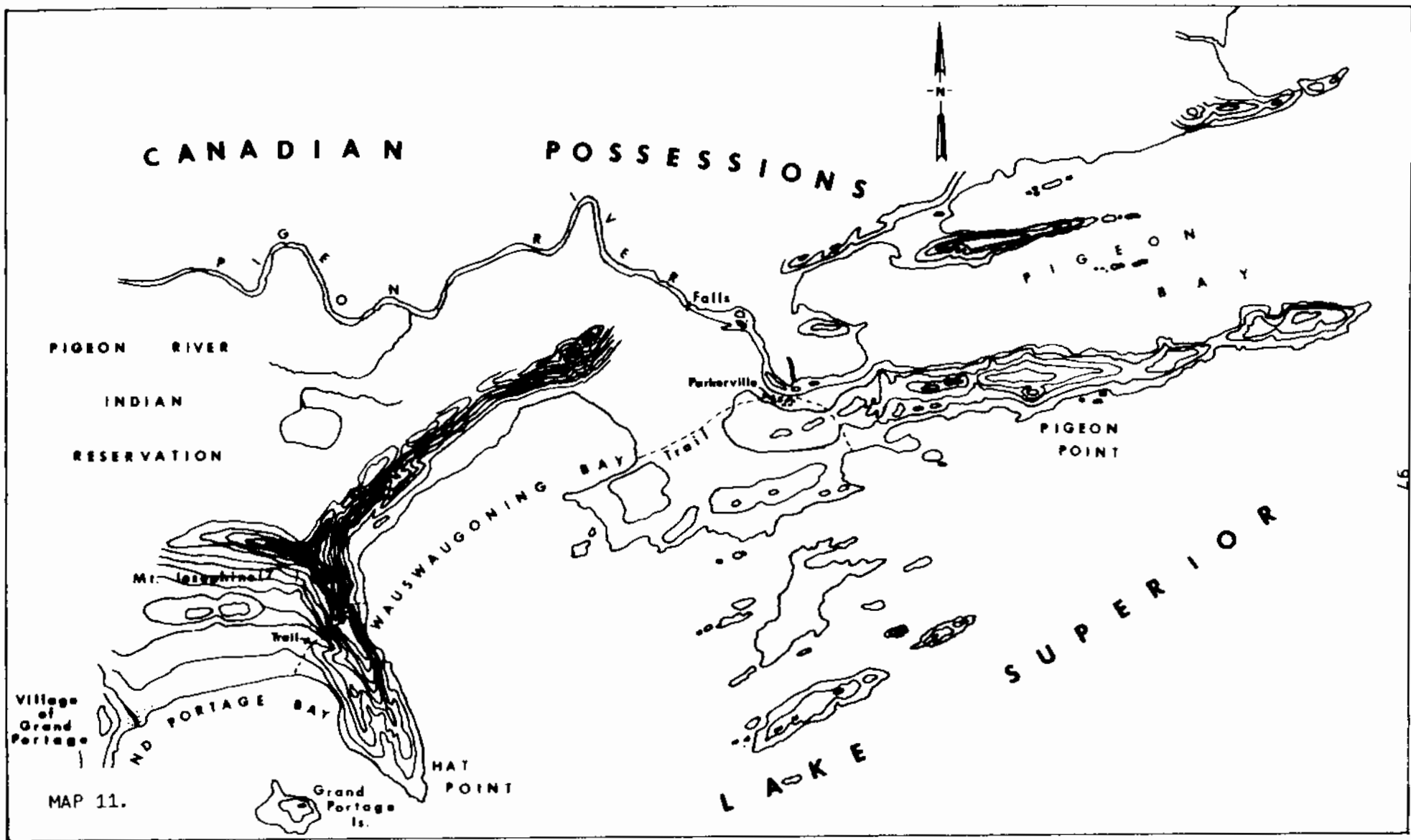
GRAND PORTAGE BAY

Surveyed by the Corps of Engineers, 1881

MAP 10.

1000 0 1000 2000 3000  
YARDS

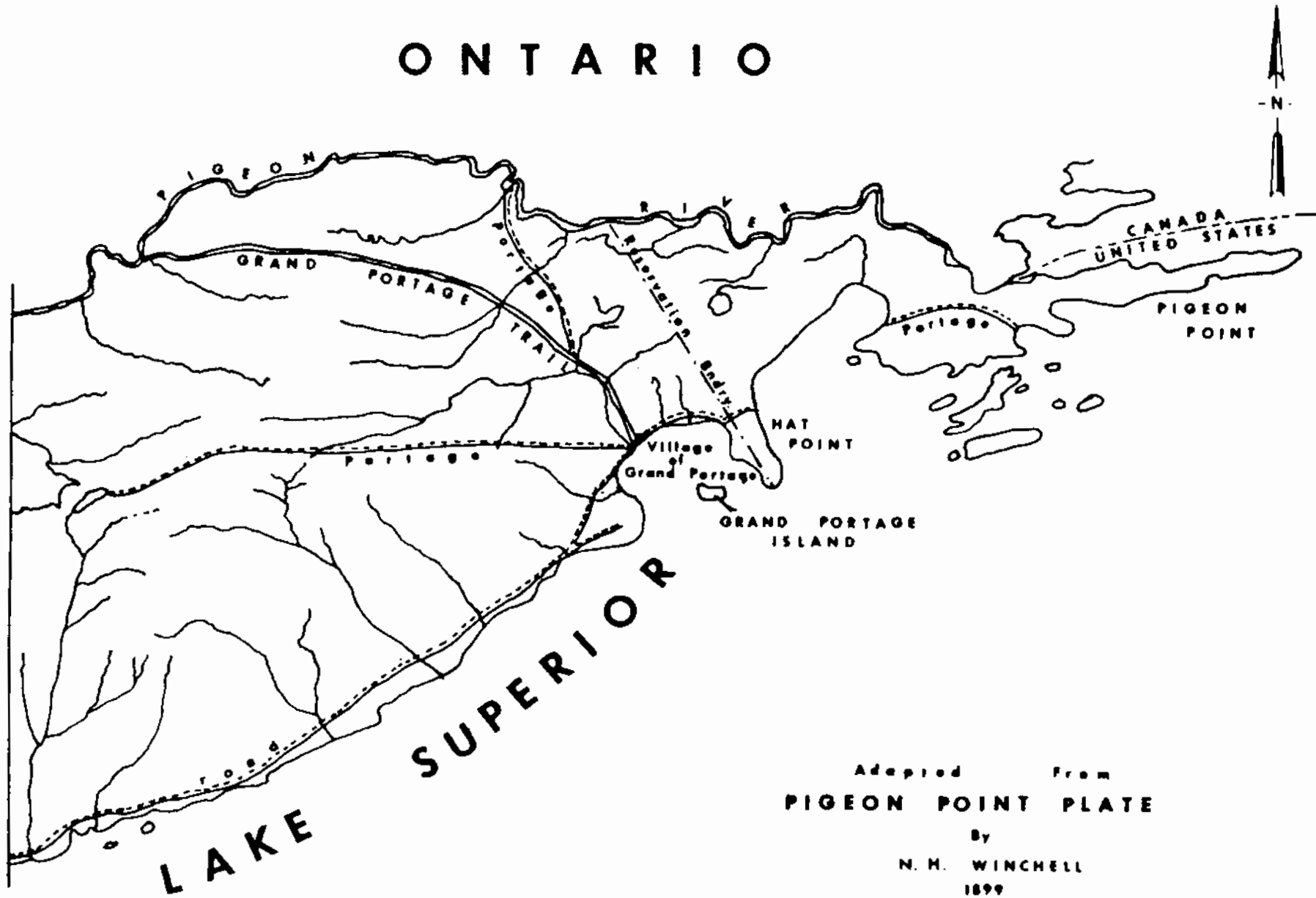
96



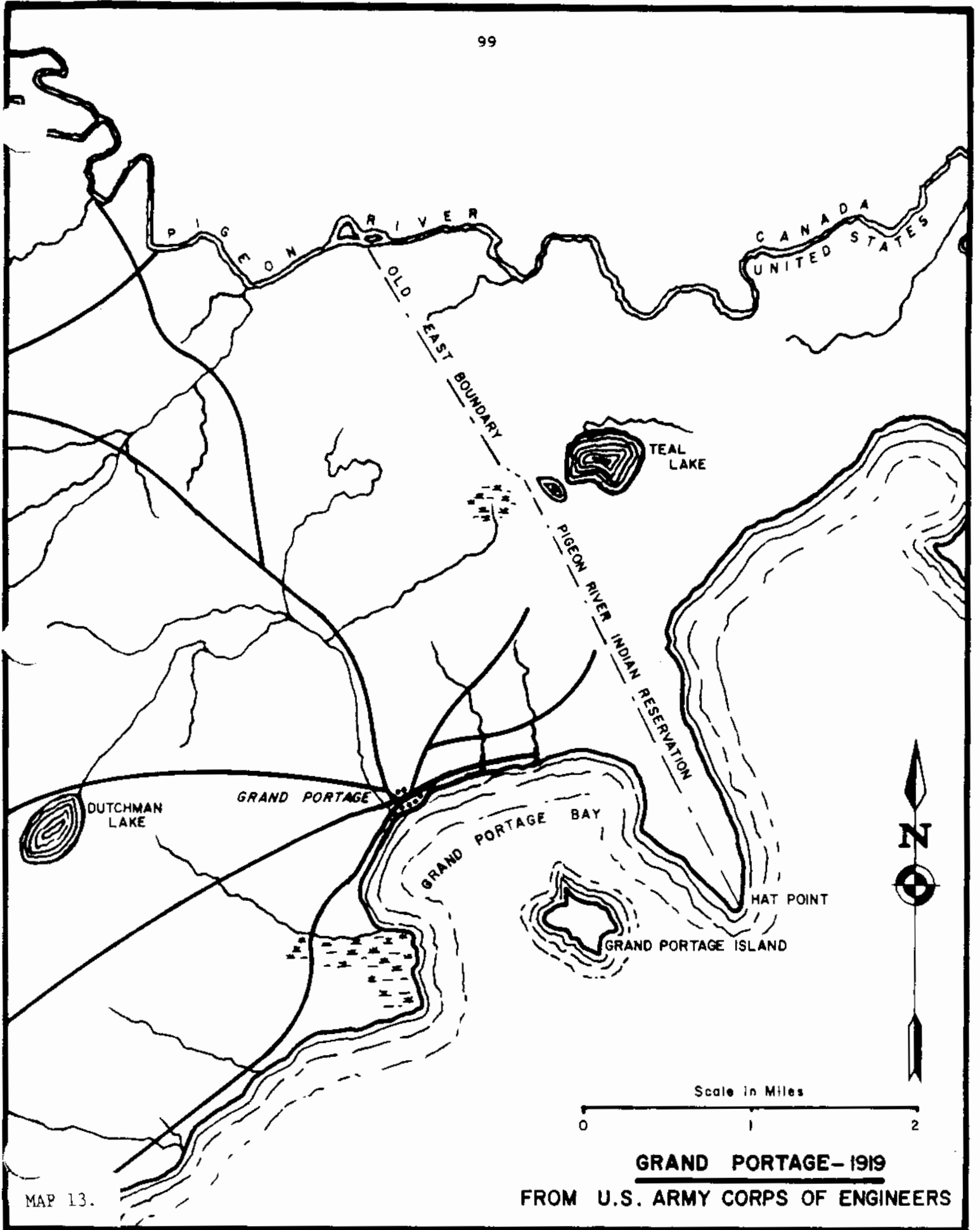
Map Of Pigeon Point And Vicinity; W. S. Bayley, 1891



# ONTARIO



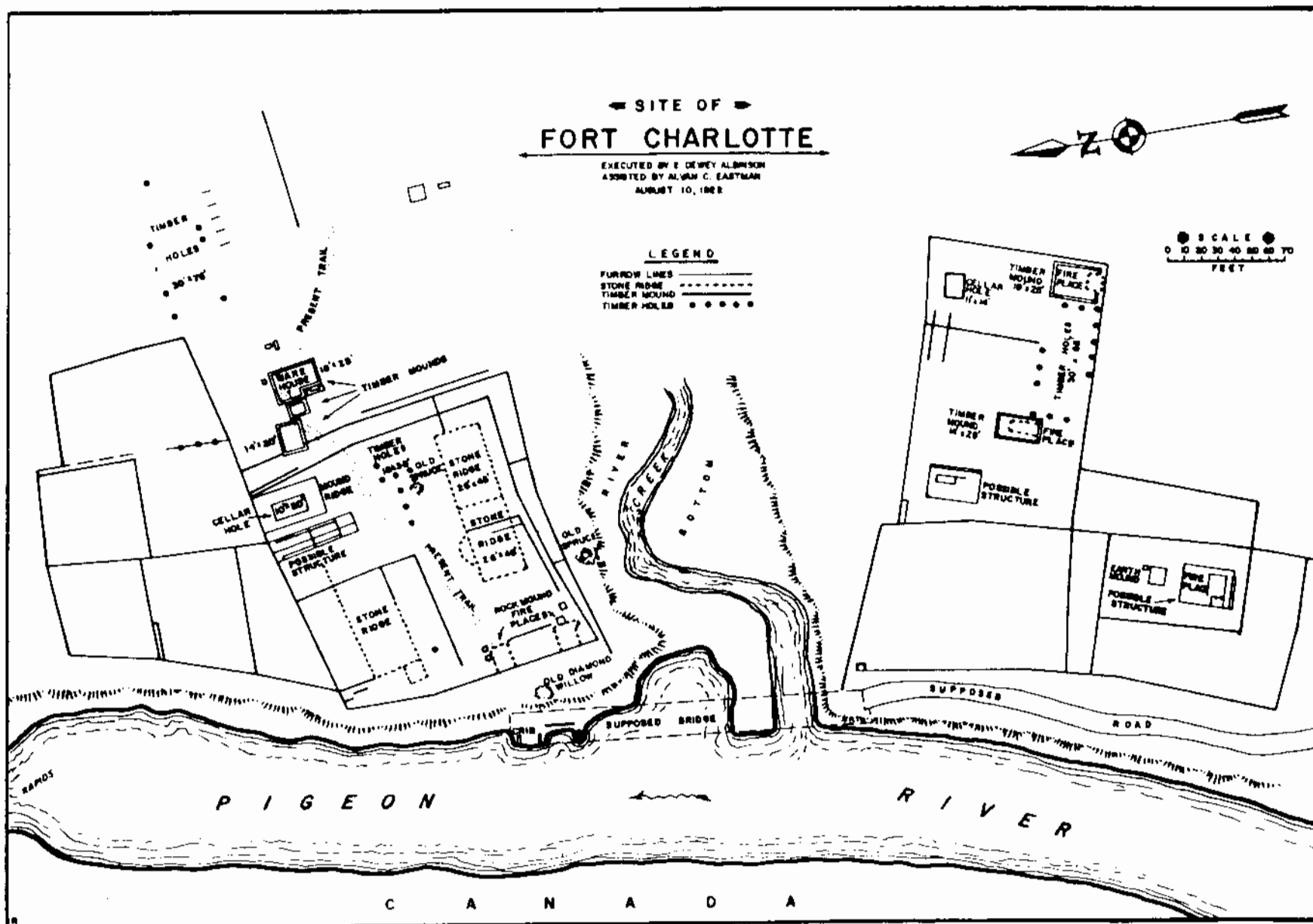
Adapted From  
**PIGEON POINT PLATE**  
By  
N. H. WINCHELL  
1899



MAP 13.

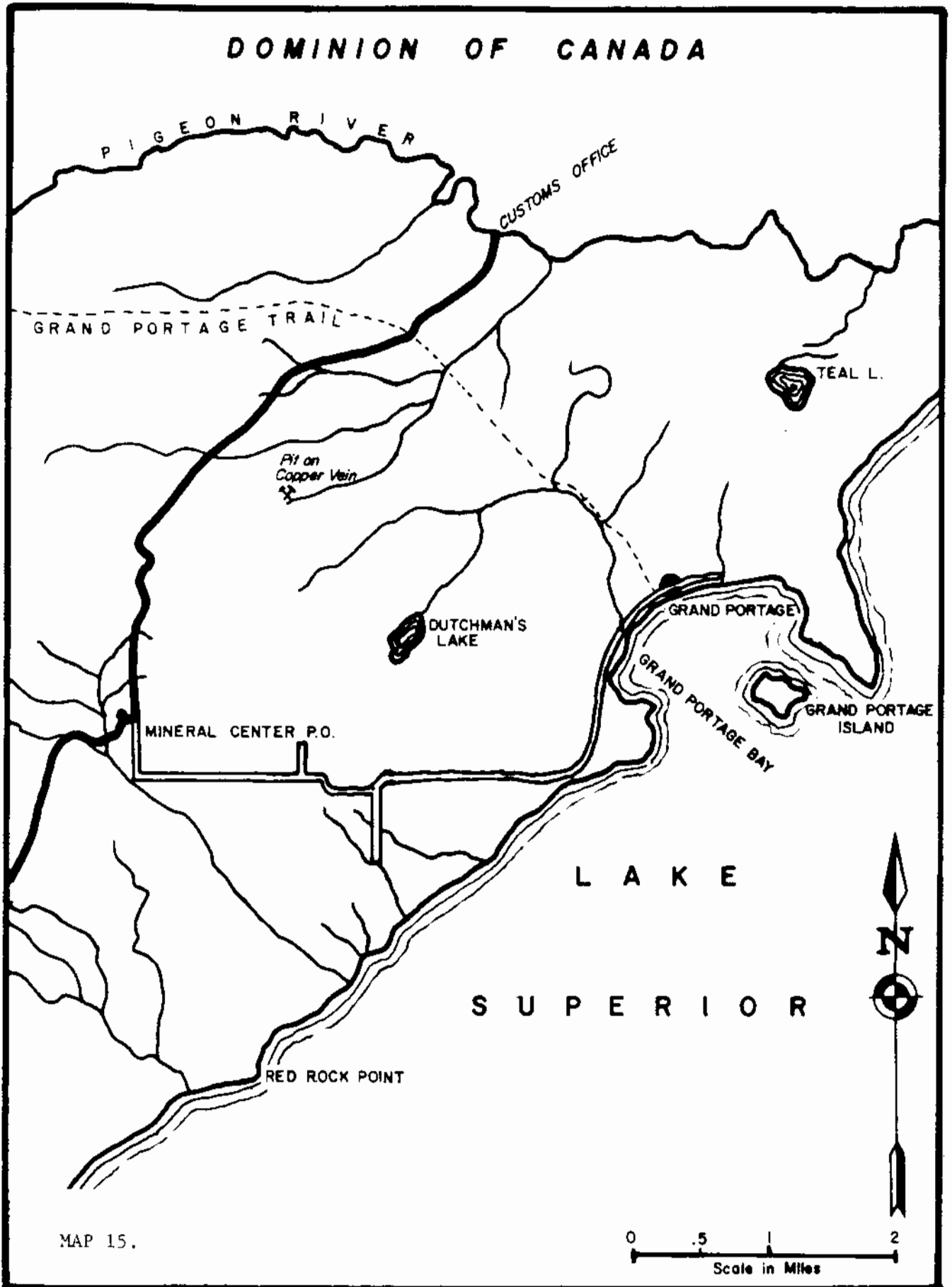
Scale in Miles  
 0 1 2

**GRAND PORTAGE-1919**  
 FROM U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

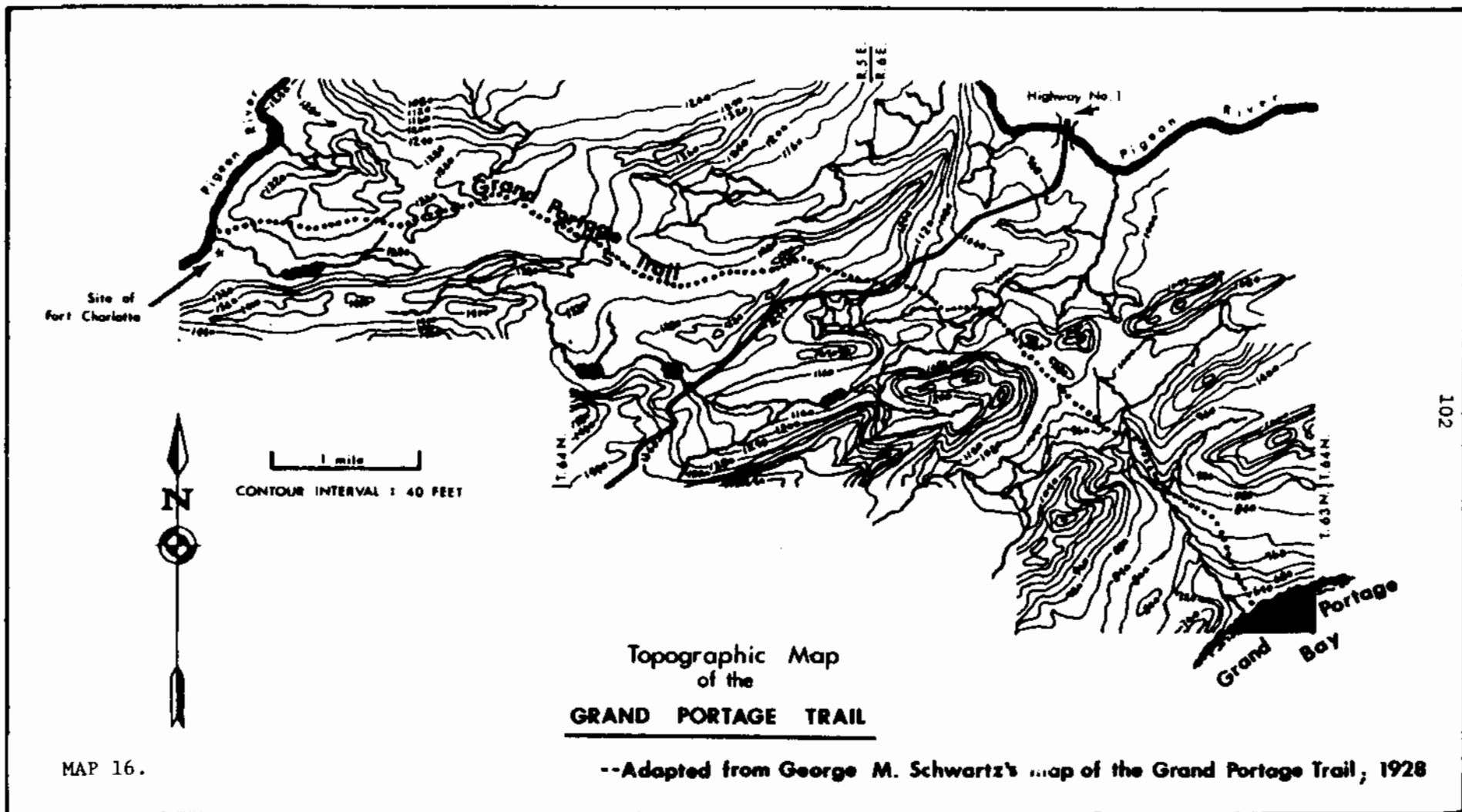


100

MAP 14. The Site of Fort Charlotte in 1922. Drawn by E. Dewey Albinson assisted by Alvan C. Eastman on August 10, 1922. Traced from the original map in the Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

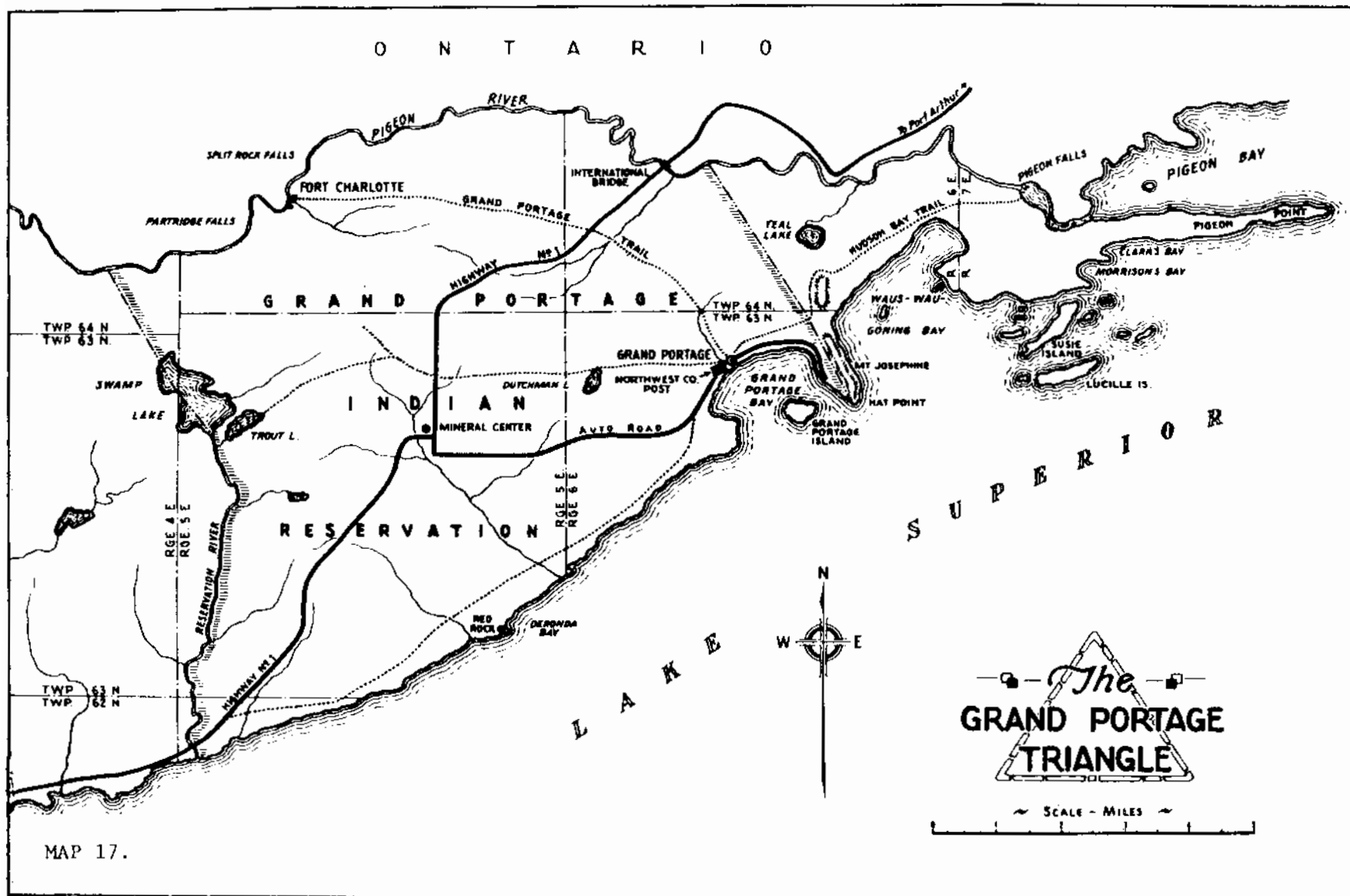


GRAND PORTAGE AND VICINITY , 1925



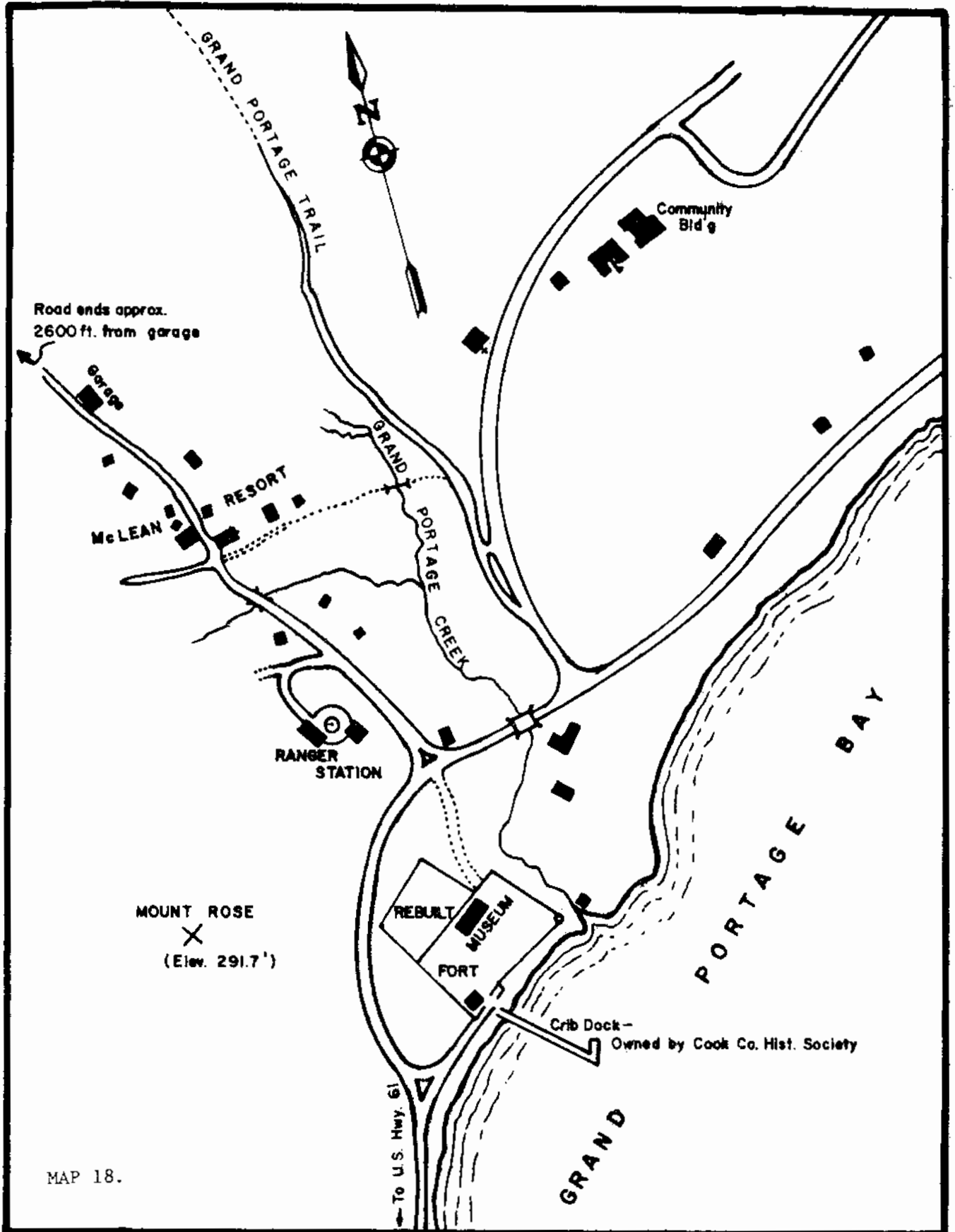
MAP 16.

O N T A R I O

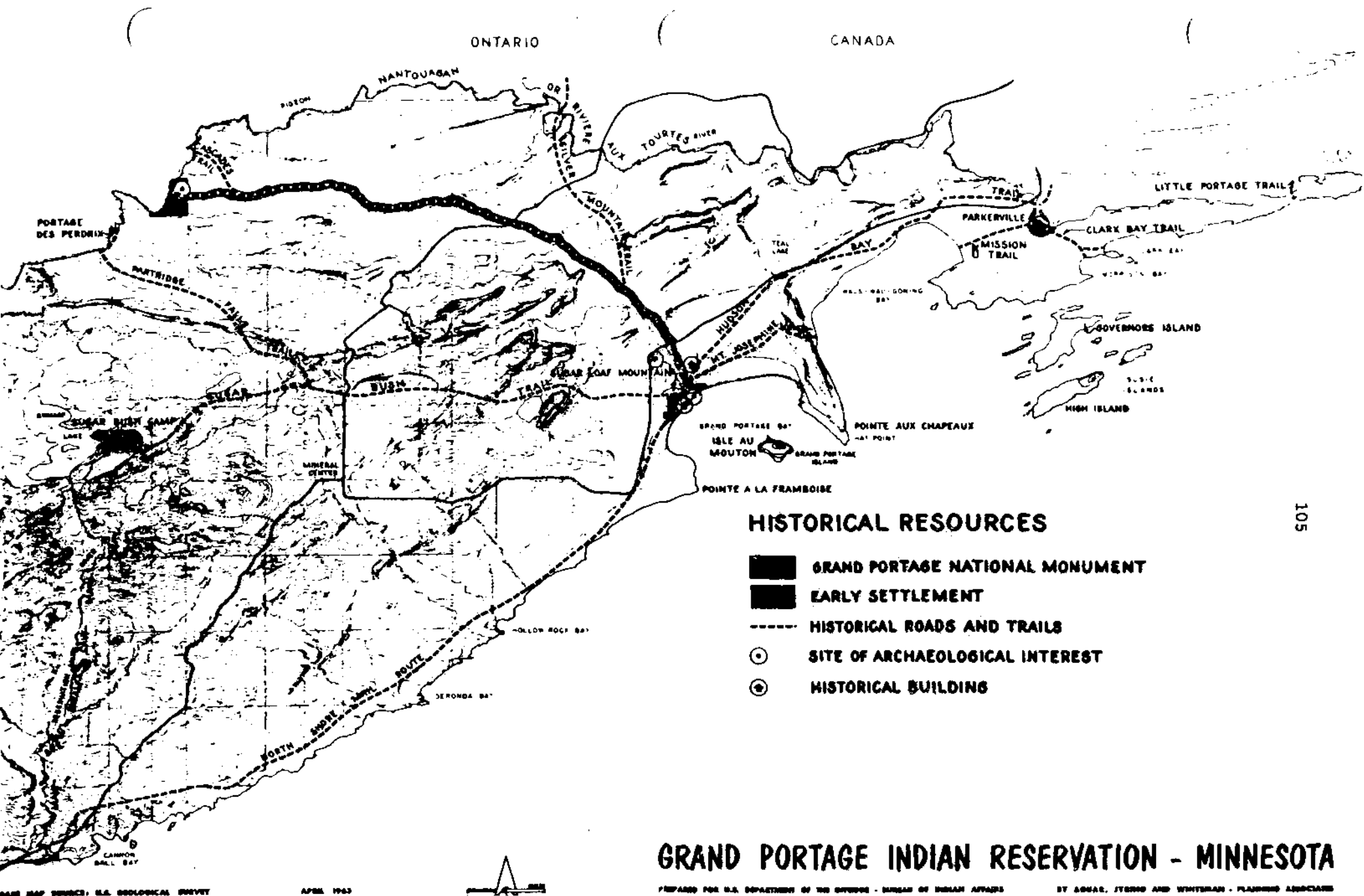


MAP 17.





GRAND PORTAGE IN 1940 , U.S.C.E. SURVEY



MAP 19. HISTORICAL RESOURCES, GRAND PORTAGE INDIAN RESERVATION, MINNESOTA.